

# THE EXPERIENCES OF FAMILIES DURING A FATHER'S INCARCERATION:

Descriptive Findings from Baseline Data Collection for the Multi-site Family Study on  
Incarceration, Parenting and Partnering



***Prepared for***

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**Administration for Children and Families/Office of Family Assistance**

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# Executive Summary

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The United States has the highest incarceration rate and the most people incarcerated in the world (International Centre for Prison Studies, 2012). Over half of the 2.3 million individuals in U.S. jails and prisons are parents, and in 2006 an estimated 7,476,500 children had a parent who was incarcerated or under correctional supervision (Glaze, 2010; Glaze & Maruschak, 2008). Many fathers in prison are in committed intimate or coparenting relationships, and their incarceration can affect their families both during and after the sentence is served.

This report describes the experiences of 1,482 incarcerated fathers and their intimate or coparenting partners. It is based on survey data collected for the impact evaluation of the Multi-site Family Study on Incarceration, Parenting and Partnering (MFS-IP), which includes in-depth, longitudinal interviews in five states (Indiana, Ohio, Minnesota, New Jersey, and New York). Although this report uses data collected for the MFS-IP evaluation, the results presented here are not findings about the impact of MFS-IP programming. Rather, the data are used to generate descriptive information on salient characteristics for a large sample of couples separated by incarceration. Because the study sample is based on a selection of competitively selected Office of Family Assistance grantees, it cannot be considered as nationally representative of the prison population as a whole nor of the prison populations in the five selected states. Nevertheless, it provides the most detailed, descriptive portrait to date of incarcerated men who are in intimate or coparenting relationships during their incarceration, and their partners.

The study sample of incarcerated men and their female partners was asked about their work and family lives prior to incarceration; their health and well-being during the fathers' incarcerations; and their expectations for reentry, including reunification with each other and their child or children. Survey questions addressed relationship quality, parenting and coparenting, family contact, and the well-being of children and mothers during the fathers' incarcerations. Detailed information about a single "focal child" for each father was obtained. One key contribution of this report is that responses reflect the dual perspectives of both men and their partners during incarceration.<sup>1</sup> Findings from subsequent interview waves at 9, 18, and (for a subset of sites) 34 months after this baseline interview will provide information on later experiences, including reentry,

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<sup>1</sup> Although men, women, and couples are generally referred to as plural subjects throughout this report, the study was designed to capture the family dynamics within each study family, which included a man, his intimate or coparenting partner, and a "focal" child (with some information captured about all of the couple's children). When emphasis is on the family dynamic within individual study couples, the male partner, female partner, and focal child are referred to collectively in the singular. Also, this report typically refers to "the incarceration" in the singular, to emphasize that the study focused on a particular incarceration experienced by the study men.

family reunification, and factors associated with reductions in criminal behavior (reports forthcoming).

## Characteristics of Study Couples

On average across sites, the 1,482 study couples<sup>2</sup> were in their early 30s at the time of the baseline interview. Twenty-five percent of sample members were married, and over 60 percent were in intimate relationships. The remaining men and women were in coparenting relationships. Over 80 percent of sample members had children under the age of 18. The study sample was racially and ethnically diverse; just over half of men and just under half of women were Black, about one-third were White, and slightly less than 10 percent were Hispanic. The average couple had been together for seven years and coparented two minor children together.

One-third of men and one-quarter of women reported not having a GED or high school diploma. The men had extensive criminal histories—more than half reported being incarcerated as juveniles, and they averaged 12 previous arrests and six adult incarcerations each. Although the women had far less criminal involvement than the men, nearly half reported having ever been arrested, with an average of 1.4 arrests.

## Six Months before Incarceration

During the six months prior to incarceration, couples were generally in longstanding relationships, living together, and parenting together, although both men and women had children with other partners as well. Despite positive reports of family life, physical and emotional abuse by both partners was reported by just under half the sample. Reports of substance use and past criminal involvement were common for the men and their social networks. Specifically:

- **Couples reported being in serious, long-term relationships.** Over half of the couples lived together before the incarceration, and the same proportion shared an income. The majority of couples reported that they often enjoyed being together as a family before the incarceration, and about half said they often did family-oriented activities together.

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<sup>2</sup> To better understand the experiences of couples and the extent to which men and women report similar experiences and attitudes, this report focuses on the 1,482 couples in which both partners participated in the baseline interview. An additional 509 men completed the baseline interview but their partners did not. Several differences existed between men whose partners completed a baseline interview and those whose partners did not. Although the subsamples were very comparable in terms of basic demographic characteristics, criminal history, and pre-incarceration experiences, men whose partners did not complete a baseline interview were incarcerated for a significantly longer period of time, were more likely to characterize the relationship as coparenting (vs. married or intimate), reported lower overall happiness with the relationship, had fewer children, and had significantly less frequent in-person and telephone contact with their partners (and less contact with their children) during their incarceration than their counterparts whose partners did complete a baseline interview.

- **The majority of men were employed prior to incarceration.** Over half of the men (61%) were employed, earning an average of \$1,907 per month and typically working in positions that did not provide paid leave or health insurance coverage.
- **Family structures were complicated, and most men had children in multiple households.** The typical man had fathered children with three different women, and women typically coparented with two different men. About two-thirds of fathers (68%) had lived with at least one of their children before the incarceration, and almost as many (62%) also had at least one child who did not live with them.
- **Most fathers did make meaningful parenting contributions before the incarceration.** Almost all (91%) reported that they provided some form of material support for at least one child prior to their incarceration. The typical father provided some financial support for two children; however, one-third had at least one child they did not financially support. Among fathers with at least one nonresidential child, 63 percent were in daily or weekly contact with at least one of those children.
- **Reports of physical and emotional abuse within the relationships were very common.** Forty percent of women and 45 percent of men who were in relationships with their study partners prior to incarceration experienced physical abuse from their partners. A smaller number experienced frequent physical abuse (13 percent of women and 14 percent of men) or frequent emotional abuse (17 percent of women and 13 percent of men). Seventeen percent of women and 10 percent of men reported severe physical or sexual abuse by their partners. In couples in which both partners experienced physical abuse, women reported feeling significantly less safe than men.
- **Education levels were low, particularly for men, and many sample members reported learning difficulties.** About one-third of the men and one-quarter of the women did not have a GED or high school degree. For 36 percent of men and 28 percent of women, a GED or high school diploma was the highest level of education attained (with a GED more common for men and a high school diploma more common for women). Only 30 percent of the men and 47 percent of the women reported any education beyond high school. Men's self-reported difficulties with reading, writing, and math were more substantial than those of their partners. Men were also less likely than their partners to rate themselves as good students during their childhoods and more likely to report having repeated a grade in school.

- **Pre-incarceration substance use was fairly high.** Almost three-quarters (71%) of men and one-quarter (26%) of women reported using at least one illicit drug (including marijuana) in the six months prior to incarceration.
- **Substance abuse and criminal justice involvement were prevalent in social networks.** Both men and women had extended family members with a history of arrest and problems with alcohol and other drugs. About one out of three men (36%) reported that all or most of their friends used illegal drugs, and 19 percent reported that all or most of their friends had been incarcerated. Two-thirds of women reported that the men's friends sometimes or often convinced them to do things they knew they should not be doing.

## **Experiences during Incarceration**

By the time of the baseline interviews, the men had already been incarcerated for several years and still had significant time remaining, but nearly all expected to be released. Over half of the women were working full time, supporting a household and at least one minor child, and experiencing generally good physical and emotional health. Social networks, including extended family and friends, were perceived as supportive and loving, even though a third of men reported receiving no visits from extended family members during their incarcerations. Specifically:

- **Men had served an average of 3.4 years of a 6.5-year sentence,** although large site differences were evident in the durations of incarceration. Nearly all of the men (99%) expected to be released. The most common offenses for which the men were incarcerated were person offenses (e.g., robbery, assault) and drug offenses.
- **Over half of the women were working full time, living in their own dwellings, and parenting.** Fifty-seven percent of women were working at the time of their baseline interview; most of these women were working full time and earning an average of \$1,618 per month. Over half of working women reported that their jobs provided health insurance coverage (59%) and fully paid leave (59%). Two-thirds of women (67%) reported that they lived in their own homes or apartments, and the majority (91%) were living with at least one of their own children.
- **Women's reports of physical and emotional health indicated generally good health, but almost one in four experienced health-related limitations.** Most women rated both their overall health and their current emotional health as good, very good, or excellent. However, women's reports were significantly worse than those of their partners, and almost one in four women (23%) reported a serious health problem that limited the amount or kind of work she could do.

- **Almost all “focal children” (children about whom detailed information was asked<sup>3</sup>) were living with their mothers** during the fathers’ incarcerations, with many living in households with other family members. Nearly all school-age children (99%) were attending school, and as with other national samples, few parents indicated that the children displayed extremely poor social skills or internalizing disorders.
- **Women reported receiving support from their social networks** during the men’s incarcerations. Women generally felt close to their families during their partners’ incarcerations and perceived them as being loving and supportive.
- **Men also reported receiving support from their social networks**, although nearly one-third had not received any personal visits during the incarceration from extended family members other than their partners and children. However, men generally felt close to their families and perceived them as being loving and supportive.

## Family Contact during Incarceration

The vast majority of men and women believed in the importance of staying in contact during the incarceration, though within couples, men felt more strongly about this. There was a larger gap between men and their partners regarding the importance of father-child contact; more men strongly agreed that father-child contact during incarceration was important. Seventy percent of fathers reported having a personal visit from at least one of their children at least monthly, and over half spoke on the telephone with at least one of their children weekly. Contact between partners varied greatly during the incarceration, and men and women reported institutional barriers to contact including the cost of phone calls and visits. Specifically:

- **Most couples believed strongly in the importance of contact with each other.** However within couples, men felt more strongly than their partners: 84 percent of men and 75 percent of women strongly agreed that staying in touch with one another during the incarceration was very important. This difference was stronger for father-child contact, where 91 percent of men and 67 percent of women strongly agreed that father-child contact during the incarceration was very important.
- **Couples’ contact during the incarceration varied widely.** More than half of men spoke to their partners at least once a week, but 16 percent never spoke to their partners. Slightly more than half of men received visits from their partners at least twice a month, whereas 21 percent never received visits from their

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<sup>3</sup> From all of a man’s children, one child was selected, with priority given to children who were parented by both members of the study couple and who were closest in age to eight years old.

partners. Letter writing was the most common form of contact, with 68 percent of men reporting that they wrote their partners every week and 55 percent reporting that they received mail from their partners every week.

- **Fathers' contact with their children during the incarceration varied widely.** Seventy percent of fathers saw one or more of their children in person at least once a month, and 55 percent spoke on the telephone with one or more of their children every week. But a sizable minority (39%) had never had in-person contact with the focal child during the current incarceration, and one-quarter had never spoken with the child on the phone.
- **Many institutional barriers affected men's efforts to maintain contact with their families.** Common barriers included the cost of telephone calls and visits, the distance from the prison to the family's home, and the prison not being a pleasant place to visit.

## **Relationship Concerns during Incarceration**

Despite having different concerns about the impact of incarceration on their relationships, more than half of men and women reported that the incarceration brought them closer together. Men and women shared similar concerns about the impact of the incarceration on their child or children, and most reported that the incarceration had a neutral or negative effect on the father-child relationship. Men perceived themselves as being more involved in parenting decisions relative to their partners' perceptions, both before and during incarceration. Specifically:

- **Men and women had many and different concerns about their romantic relationships during the incarceration.** Men's concerns included uncertainty about the male partner's place in the family during the incarceration and fears that the partners would drift apart or become involved with other people. Women were concerned about the male partner's lifestyle while in prison, challenges with forgiveness, and financial or schedule issues that prevented the female partner from accepting the male partner's collect calls.
- **Over half of the men and women reported that the incarceration had brought them closer together.** However, women were less likely to report increased closeness as compared with men.
- **Parents shared many fears and concerns about their children.** Men and women were both concerned about their children's well-being during the incarceration—specifically, the child's happiness, the lack of a male role model, the lack of money to support the child, and the possibility that father and child would not be as close as they were before the incarceration.



- **Men and women reported that the incarceration had a negative or neutral effect on father-child relationships.** Women were significantly less likely than their male partners to report increased closeness in the father-child relationship as a result of the incarceration.
- **Perspectives on parenting decision making differed.** Men and women both reported that men played less of a role in parenting decisions during the incarceration than they had before. Within couples, men perceived their own role in parenting decisions as being more significant than their partners did, both before and during the incarceration. Men also believed more strongly than their female partners did in the idea that incarcerated fathers could still be involved in parenting decisions.

## Expectations for Reentry

The vast majority of men and women were optimistic about remaining in committed relationships after release and felt that it would be easy to have good relationships. They did recognize incarceration-related relationship concerns, like the male partner missing what had happened in the female partner's life and living up to her expectations for not using drugs, getting a job, and helping financially. Men also believed that it would be easy to resume the relationship with the focal child but had concerns about having missed much of the child's life. Overall, men thought it would be easy to reconnect with their families, find employment, and stay away from drugs. Although women were slightly less optimistic, they generally felt the same. Specifically:

- **The vast majority of men and women expected to live together post-release.** Among couples who considered their relationship to be an intimate one (as opposed to coparenting only), the vast majority of men (91%) and women (86%) intended to remain in a committed relationship after the man's release. Overall, 83 percent of men and 75 percent of women expected that the couple would live together after release.
- **Overall, both men and women thought it would be easy to continue the couple's relationship post-release.** Nearly half of men reported that it would be very easy for the couple to have a good relationship after his release. These reports were significantly more positive than those of their partners, but 34 percent of women also reported that it would be very easy. Among both men and women, the top concern about the couple's relationship was his having missed out on so much that happened in her life during the incarceration, followed by his trying to meet her expectations for him finding a job, staying away from drugs, and helping her financially.
- **Men were also optimistic about how easy it would be for them to have good relationships with their children after release.** Most men (78%) and women

(68%) expected that the father would live with the focal child after release, and 92 percent of men and 62 percent of women expected that he would financially support the child after release. The most commonly anticipated challenge from the men's perspective was having missed out on so much that happened in the child's life during his incarceration.

- **Men and women had different expectations for parental decision making.** Although both partners most often reported expecting to make decisions jointly, men were significantly more likely than their female partners to anticipate that the couple would make decisions together.
- **Men and women were optimistic about receiving tangible support from family and friends during reentry, and men were optimistic about their reemployment prospects.** Within couples, the female partner was significantly less optimistic than the male partner about the ease of his finding a decent job, the likelihood that he would use illegal drugs, and the likelihood of his being reincarcerated after his release.

## Summary of Baseline Descriptive Findings

Descriptive data from these baseline interviews with men in prison and their female partners reveal some of the complexities associated with maintaining positive family relationships during incarceration.

On the one hand, among the 1,482 men whose partners responded to the baseline interview, the average couple had been together for over seven years and had parented two children together, despite being separated by the incarceration for over three years. More than half of the couples had lived together and shared an income prior to incarceration, and thought the incarceration brought them closer together; similarly, more than half of the men were in contact with their partners and focal children at least weekly during the incarceration. Almost all fathers reported having provided at least some financial support to at least one child prior to incarceration. More than half of the women reported working full time at positions that offered health benefits and paid leave during the men's incarcerations.

On the other hand, life appeared bleak for many respondents on several indicators of life before and during the men's incarcerations. More than a third of the men were unemployed and/or had at least one child they did not support prior to incarceration. Close to one half of men and women reported experiencing physical abuse from their partners, and 10 percent of men and 17 percent of women reported severe physical or sexual abuse prior to incarceration. Additionally, close to three out of four men reported using illicit substances prior to incarceration, and over one-third reported that all or most of their friends used illegal drugs. During the incarceration, more than a third of men reported little contact with their partners and/or children. More than a

third of the women were unemployed, and almost a quarter reported having a serious health problem that prevented them from working during the men's incarcerations.

## Context for Policy Development

These initial descriptive findings suggest many challenges for policy makers to consider when developing policies to address the needs of this diverse group of incarcerated fathers and their families. Findings among the study sample that may be useful in guiding decisions on how to structure supports for families include

- **Family structures are complex.** Supports for families affected by incarceration must take into account the complicated reality of pre-incarceration family life, rather than attempting simply to address the disruption prompted by incarceration.
- **Research and practice with this population may need to target families earlier in the incarceration term to engage both members of the couple.** The analysis of 509 men whose partners did not respond to the baseline interview—a likely indicator of tenuous relationships—highlights this finding. Men whose partners did not complete the interview had been incarcerated longer, reported more relationship strain, and reported much less in-person contact with partners and children. (Future multivariate analyses will explore the apparent correlation between family relationship strains and the point in the incarceration term at which a father was interviewed.)
- **Maintenance of contact with family members during incarceration is not easy.** Both partners reported distance, costs, and the atmosphere of the prison environment as being barriers to contact. To facilitate contact, programs may have to address many institutional barriers, using strategies such as creating child-friendly visitation rooms within prisons, calling on utility companies to establish reasonable telephone rates for calls placed from prisons, and challenging correctional policies that place many residents hundreds of miles from their home communities. In addition, video visitation as a supplement to opportunities for in-person contact may help some families remain connected.
- **Efforts to support fathers and children in maintaining or improving their relationships (such as through supported visitation) may be helpful.** Although many couples seem to get closer during an incarceration, this is usually not the case for fathers and children. This suggests that interventions need to address the very different experiences among family members of the same incarcerated man.
- **Women affected by a partner's incarceration might benefit from additional types of support.** Over three-quarters of the female sample (82%) reported at

least one of the following conditions: likely clinical depression, physical limitations relating to work, lack of health insurance, or unemployment. This suggests that policies that take into account stressors for women affected by incarceration (e.g., strains associated with single parenting, behavioral or mental illness, financial problems) could be beneficial.

- **Negotiating reentry as a family requires realistic planning.** Men, but to a lesser degree their partners, reported very optimistic expectations about their reentry success. Previous research has shown that pre-release optimism is associated with post-release success for reentry samples (Burnett & Maruna, 2004), so being optimistic could be important for couples' reentry success. However, it is possible that within couples, one-sided optimism could lead to post-release conflict, abrupt changes in housing plans, and associated parole violation risks. Couples facing reentry need help to develop realistic and mutually agreed-upon plans for a healthy family life after release.
- **Substance abuse is a major issue for justice-involved men and their social networks.** Many of the men and some of the women were using illicit drugs prior to incarceration. Substance abuse is a significant predictor of recidivism among reentering persons (Hakansson & Berglund, 2012). Finding effective approaches to screening, assessing, and treating currently incarcerated and reentering persons with drug and alcohol problems—and their partners—could help mitigate family distress.
- **Intimate partner violence needs to be addressed.** The high proportion of couples reporting physical and emotional abuse within their relationships prior to incarceration (40 percent of women and 45 percent of men reported experiencing physical abuse from their partners, and 46 percent of women and 38 percent of men reported perpetrating physical abuse against their partners, prior to incarceration), coupled with widespread intentions to continue the relationships after release, suggests the need for intervention with both members of the couple.
- **Some characteristics of the population point to the need for early intervention and prevention strategies.** Many of the men (53%) were involved with the juvenile justice system, often beginning in adolescence. Additionally, education deficits and learning problems were high, particularly for men. Given the strong correlation between school failure and juvenile justice involvement, prevention and early intervention approaches are needed.

These descriptive baseline findings on 1,482 intimate or coparenting couples in five states offer the beginning of a portrait that findings from subsequent waves of survey data will continue to augment. Understanding the characteristics, experiences, and aspirations of couples who have maintained their relationships through several years of

incarceration will be crucial in developing programs and policies that meet the needs of similar families. The data and evaluation results will also shed light on the conceptual frameworks in the literature that link family support with desistance from crime. Although more data are needed to examine these frameworks within the MFS-IP sample, the role of the family in reducing criminal activity clearly merits investigation. Family contact and family support alone may be less effective than family support in a policy environment that also addresses other key challenges, such as poverty and histories of criminal justice involvement.

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# Chapter 1. Introduction

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This report describes the experiences of a large sample of incarcerated fathers in five states and their intimate or coparenting partners, including background characteristics, relationship quality, parenting and coparenting, family contact during incarceration, and the well-being of children and mothers during the fathers' incarcerations.<sup>4</sup> It is based on baseline interview data from the impact study component of the Multi-site Family Study on Incarceration, Parenting and Partnering (MFS-IP). Although this report uses data collected for the MFS-IP evaluation, the results presented here are not findings about the impact of MFS-IP programming. Rather, the data are used to generate descriptive information on salient characteristics for a large sample of couples separated by incarceration. The study sample is not nationally representative, nor does it represent the general prison populations in the five selected states. Additionally, there was significant variation in the characteristics of the study populations at each of the sites. However, descriptive information collected for this study provides the most detailed portrait to date of couples in intimate or coparenting relationships during a man's incarceration, thereby providing information that can be used to help support policy decisions and programming intended to strengthen families affected by incarceration. The study couples were asked about their lives prior to incarceration, their experiences during the men's incarcerations, and their expectations for reentry and reunification. Findings from subsequent interview waves at 9, 18, and (for a subset of sites) 34 months after this baseline interview will provide information on later experiences, including reentry experiences and family reunification. This chapter of the report provides a brief overview of the literature related to families and incarceration and describes the MFS-IP evaluation and research questions.

## What Do We Know about Families Affected by Incarceration?

### *Families Affected by Incarceration*

The United States has the highest incarceration rate and the largest total number of incarcerated people in the world (International Centre for Prison Studies, 2012). Over half of the 2.3 million individuals in U.S. jails and prisons are parents, and in 2006, an estimated 7,476,500 children had a parent who was incarcerated or under correctional supervision (Glaze, 2010; Glaze & Maruschak, 2008). Among parents in state prisons, 48

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<sup>4</sup> Although men, women, and couples are generally referred to as plural subjects throughout this report, the study was designed to capture the family dynamics within each study family, which included a man, his intimate or coparenting partner, and a "focal" child (with some information captured about all of the couple's children). When emphasis is on the family dynamic within individual study couples, the male partner, female partner, and focal child are referred to collectively in the singular. Also, this report typically refers to "the incarceration" in the singular, to emphasize that the study focused on a particular incarceration experienced by the study men.

percent reported living with at least one of their children during either the month before arrest or just prior to incarceration (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008).

Many fathers in prison are in committed intimate relationships. The Multi-Site Evaluation of the Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative (SVORI) reported that 75 percent of incarcerated fathers were either married or in an intimate relationship (Lattimore, Visher, & Steffey, 2008). Nationally representative data for men incarcerated in state prisons show that 44 percent were either married or had lived with a spouse or intimate partner prior to their incarceration (at the time of their arrest; unpublished analyses conducted on the 2004 Survey of Inmates in State and Federal Correctional Facilities).

Incarceration predominantly affects families already living in poverty; two-thirds of jail inmates come from households with incomes under 50 percent of the federal poverty line (Wildeman, 2009). Families of color have disproportionately high rates of parental incarceration, which deepens existing socioeconomic and health disparities. Black children born in 1990 had a 25.1 percent risk of having their father imprisoned by age 14 compared with a 3.6 percent risk for White children born in the same year (Wildeman, 2009).

### *Children's Well-Being*

Parental incarceration places a substantial burden on already vulnerable children and their caretakers, including stigmatization, emotional and financial strain, and disruption in the home environment (Hagan & Dinovitzer, 1999; Herman Stahl, Kan, & McKay, 2008). Children with an incarcerated parent are more likely to experience internalizing disorders such as anxiety and depression and to exhibit more behavioral and academic problems than similarly poor or disadvantaged children (Wakefield & Wildeman, 2011; Murray & Farrington, 2005). Psychological reactions to separation are central challenges for children of incarcerated mothers and fathers alike (Parke & Clarke-Stewart, 2003).

### *Women's Experiences during a Partner's Incarceration*

The financial and emotional costs of maintaining contact with an incarcerated partner can be large. They impact women's already limited economic resources; introduce new parenting challenges; and can increase resentment, anger, and other dynamics that impede reunification (Comfort, 2008; Arditti, 2005; Fishman, 1990; Hairston, Rollin, & Jo, 2004; Nurse, 2002; Grinstead, Faigeles, Bancroft, & Zack, 2001). Women raising children are particularly vulnerable to depression and other mental health issues when the fathers of their children are incarcerated (Wildeman, Schnittker, & Turney, 2012). Lack of contact between partners during an incarceration often erodes the bonds of partnership and introduces numerous obstacles to emotional closeness upon reentry (Travis, McBride, & Solomon, 2005; Herman Stahl, Kan, & McKay, 2008).



### *Family Contact during Incarceration*

In families with an incarcerated parent, high quality and frequent parent-child contact appear to lower parenting stress, strengthen attachment, and improve child involvement and compliance with child support among noncustodial parents after release and may ultimately improve child outcomes (Hairston and Oliver, 2007; Arditti, 2005; Johnson, 2006; Poehlmann, 2005; LaVigne, Naser, Brooks, & Castro, 2005; Landreth & Lobaugh, 1998). Fathers with more family contact during incarceration are less likely to recidivate (Bales & Mears, 2008; Hairston, 2002).

### *Potential Supports for Families*

Programs to strengthen couple relationships, improve parenting skills, and build family economic well-being can be effective in easing the stress of reentry. Such programs might also contribute to the overall stability of the vulnerable families most affected by incarceration (Bronte-Tinkew, Burkhauser, Mbwana, Metz, & Collins, 2008).

### *Research Gaps*

Although designed to answer research questions about the impact of family strengthening programs on family relationship quality and other outcomes, including recidivism, the extensive data collected for the MFS-IP evaluation can also be used to address a number of gaps in the literature. This report will contribute to the research base in the following specific areas:

- Understanding both partners' perspectives on family relationships and interactions, including parenting prior to and during a father's incarceration;
- Understanding couple dynamics and practical arrangements, such as housing, household contributions, and employment from both partners' perspectives;
- Understanding the challenges and solutions families find in addressing the incarceration of a father, including detailed information about the extent and nature of fathers' contact with their families and children;
- Documenting the experiences of children of incarcerated fathers during an incarceration, including school and extracurricular engagement, behavior, and physical and emotional well-being; and
- Investigating incarcerated fathers' and their partners' understandings of the family formations and kinship networks that might promote men's successful reintegration after imprisonment and support the well-being of women and children.

## **What Can the MFS-IP Study Tell Us?**

### *The MFS-IP Initiative*

The Office of Family Assistance (OFA) within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Administration for Children and Families (ACF), funded the programs in the MFS-IP study in 2006. OFA required that grantees serve fathers who were either incarcerated or recently released, as well as their spouses or committed partners. Grantees were required to deliver services to promote healthy marriage and were also permitted to provide activities designed to improve parenting and support economic stability.

From 2006 to 2011, the 12<sup>5</sup> MFS-IP study sites delivered a variety of family strengthening services, including relationship skills training (provided at all sites), parenting classes, case management, financial literacy education, and child-friendly visitation. Program models implemented by these pioneering grantees varied in their emphasis. Some provided intensive, holistic services to smaller numbers of participants, whereas others provided a briefer, skills-building intervention to larger numbers of participants. Some offered services at any time during the father's incarceration, whereas others focused specifically on the post-admission period and/or on the period immediately before and after release.

### *Study Overview*

In an effort to maximize learning from these pioneering programs, OFA and the HHS Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation funded RTI International to conduct a national study of these OFA-funded family strengthening programs. The study addresses these key research questions:

- What are the defining characteristics of the grantees and their programs?
- What lessons can be learned from program implementation?
- How successful were the programs at achieving the desired outcomes?
- To what extent do the interventions appear to have a positive impact?

To answer these questions, RTI was funded to conduct an implementation assessment in the 12 funded sites, an impact study in a subset of five selected sites, a qualitative substudy of post-release reentry challenges and successes, and additional quantitative analysis using the study sample.

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<sup>5</sup> Of the 14 sites originally funded by OFA, 12 received funding for the full five-year grant period.

### *Implementation Study*

Because of the innovative nature of the MFS-IP programs, it was important to document the different approaches, challenges, and successes of the funded programs. Through in-person and telephone interviews with program staff, organizational partners, and program participants, the evaluation team compiled descriptive information and identified lessons that may be helpful for future programs. These reports are available at <http://aspe.hhs.gov/basic-report/evaluation-marriage-and-family-strengthening-grants-incarcerated-and-reentering-fathers-and-their-partners>.

### *Impact Study Design*

The impact study is designed to assess the impact of MFS-IP programming on participant outcomes such as marital stability, relationship quality, positive family interactions, family financial well-being, and recidivism. It compares the experiences of couples who participated in MFS-IP programs in five sites—Council on Crime and Justice (Minnesota), Indiana Department of Correction, New Jersey Department of Corrections, Osborne Association (New York), and RIDGE Project (Ohio)—with the experiences of similar couples who did not participate in MFS-IP programs.

Each site’s program components and target population were unique, so RTI developed site-specific strategies for recruiting a control or comparison group in each. These included an experimental design in Minnesota, a wait-list comparison design in Ohio, and matched comparison group designs in Indiana, New Jersey, and New York. Longitudinal, computer-assisted personal interviews with nearly 1,500 couples and an additional 500 men who were in intimate or coparenting relationships but whose partners could not be interviewed across the five sites serve as the main data source for the impact study.

### *Impact Study Data Collection Approach*

Couples were first interviewed during the male partner’s incarceration (baseline interviews took place at the time of enrollment in MFS-IP programming for treatment group couples and at the point of identification for the comparison group for comparison group couples) and then interviewed again 9 and 18 months later. In the two largest sites (Indiana and Ohio), an additional 34-month follow-up interview was conducted to assess longer-term impacts. At each wave, interviews included questions on background characteristics (e.g., demographics, attitudes, motivation, criminal history, relationship history), service provision (types of services received, delivery format, number and duration of sessions), relationship quality and stability, parenting

The interviews were conducted in person by trained field interviewers. Particularly sensitive topics, such as partner violence, relationship quality, criminal behavior, and substance abuse were covered using audio-computer-assisted self-interviewing to reduce social desirability bias.

and child well-being, employment and economic stability, and criminal behavior and substance abuse. For this baseline report, all of the data are from self-reports, and no responses have been externally validated.

Incarcerated men who self-identified as being married, in a committed intimate relationship, or in a coparenting relationship were consented and interviewed first.<sup>6</sup> A total of 1,991 eligible men completed a baseline interview. The response rate for eligible men at baseline was 82 percent (81 percent for treatment group men and 82 percent for comparison group men). During the baseline interview, each man was asked to identify and provide contact information for his primary intimate or

coparenting partner. As part of the baseline male interview, interviewers also identified a “focal child” about whom additional questions would be asked. From all of a man’s children, one child was selected, with priority given to children who were parented by both members of the study couple and who were closest in age to eight years old. Focusing on similarly aged children allowed for meaningful measurement of changes in child well-being over time.

After the male baseline interview was completed, we contacted the partner and interviewed those who consented to participate in the study.<sup>7</sup> A total of 1,482 eligible women completed baseline interviews. The response rate for eligible women at baseline was 75 percent (78 percent for treatment group women and 72 percent for comparison group women).

In this report, we present descriptive analyses for the 1,482 couples in which both partners completed a baseline interview. The data are therefore based on all female baseline respondents and the subset of male respondents whose partners completed a

#### **Understanding Men’s and Women’s Survey Reports**

To better understand the experiences of couples and the extent to which men and women report similar experiences and attitudes, this report focuses on the 1,482 couples in which both partners participated in the baseline survey.

Throughout the report, we report results by gender. The graphics present differences between the male and female subsamples by showing results side by side. We also report differences within couples using matched pair t-tests. The t-tests show **whether average differences between the male and female member of the couple were statistically significant** (at a critical alpha level of 0.05).

The matched-pair t-test approach is also used **to** examine couple-level congruence for the questions on partner violence (see **Chapter 3**).

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<sup>6</sup> In addition to being incarcerated and in a self-reported intimate or coparenting relationship, in order to be eligible men also had to be 18 or older, speak English, be physically and mentally capable of participating in an interview, and agree to provide contact information for their partners. Couples in which a restraining order was in place were considered ineligible, as were couples for which the woman denied that an intimate or coparenting relationship existed when contacted for her baseline interview.

<sup>7</sup> Women who were under the age of 18, did not speak English, or were not physically or mentally capable of participating in the interview were ineligible for the study. In addition, if a woman reported that a restraining order was in place or denied that she was in an intimate or coparenting relationship with the male, both she and the male partner were considered ineligible.

baseline interview. **Appendix A** compares the characteristics of the 509 men whose partners did not complete the baseline interview (who were excluded from the analyses presented in this report) with the 1,482 men whose partners did participate in the interview at baseline.

Because this report provides descriptive information on the families included in the study, data are combined across sites and for treatment and comparison group members. Because of site variation in program capacity and enrollment, sample sizes are not even across the five sites. The largest sites are Indiana (contributing 577 couples, 39 percent of the total sample) and Ohio (527 couples, 36 percent of the sample), followed by New Jersey (180 couples, 12 percent of the sample), New York (126 couples, nine percent of the sample), and Minnesota (72 couples, five percent of the sample). The uneven sample distribution should be kept in mind when interpreting the data. **Appendix B** includes site-specific data tables for key variables presented throughout the remainder of this report.

As noted previously, the study sample is not nationally representative. In addition, because of the study eligibility criteria, the state samples do not represent the general prison population within a given state. Rather, the study sample offers a snapshot of relationship experiences and challenges among a population of intimate or coparenting couples in which the man is incarcerated—a population of interest for policy makers and program developers interested in supporting families affected by incarceration.

## Topics Covered in this Report

**Chapter two** of this baseline report describes the characteristics of the MFS-IP families and summarizes pre-incarceration and incarceration characteristics of the men in the study. **Chapter three** provides information on the couple relationships, including relationship history, quality, and challenges and experiences during incarceration. **Chapter four** focuses on parenting and coparenting experiences, including parenting status, parenting before and during incarceration, and the quality of parent-child and coparenting relationships. Extended family and peer relationships, including criminal and substance use backgrounds, are described in **Chapter five**. Women’s experiences during their partners’ incarcerations are described in **Chapter six** and children’s experiences during their fathers’ incarcerations are discussed in **Chapter seven**. **Chapter eight** discusses men’s and women’s expectations for release, as couples, as parents, and as members of extended families and the community. The last chapter, **Chapter nine**, summarizes the descriptive findings and important contexts for policy development, which are also highlighted at the end of each chapter. **Appendix A** and **Appendix B** provide additional detail about the men in the sample, showing variation by partner participation and study site.

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# Chapter 2. Characteristics of MFS-IP Families

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In this chapter, we describe the men and women in our study:

- 1,482 men who, at the time of their baseline interviews, were incarcerated in a state prison in Indiana, Ohio, Minnesota, New Jersey, or New York; and
- 1,482 female partners—including intimate or coparenting partners—identified by the men at their baseline interviews.

Using information reported in the baseline interviews,<sup>8</sup> we present basic demographic characteristics of the men and women, along with the men’s pre-incarceration and incarceration characteristics. As described in **Chapter one**, we conducted baseline interviews with a total of 1,991 men (82 percent of men who were eligible for the study). Additional information about the 509 men whose partners did not complete a baseline interview can be found in **Appendix A**.

## Demographics and Background Characteristics

### *Age and Family Characteristics*

**Exhibit 2-1** shows basic demographic characteristics of the 1,482 couples (combined across sites, with site-specific characteristics presented separately in **Appendix B**). As shown in the exhibit:

- The average age for male and female sample members at the time of their baseline interview was early 30s. Within study couples, men tended to be older than their partners.
- Twenty-five percent of sample members were married to one another, and over 60 percent were in nonmarried intimate relationships with one another.

As context for understanding how the MFS-IP study sample compares to nationally representative data on incarcerated men, Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) data show that 44 percent of men incarcerated in state prisons were either married or had lived with a spouse or intimate partner prior to their incarceration (at the time of their arrest; unpublished analyses conducted on the 2004 Survey of Inmates in State and Federal Correctional Facilities). Data from the same survey show that 51 percent of men in state prisons are parents of minor children and that incarcerated parents report an average of two children (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008). Because the MFS-IP study sample focuses on men who are fathers and in intimate relationships, it does not represent prison populations as a whole.

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<sup>8</sup> The baseline interviews took place at the time of enrollment in the MFS-IP family strengthening programs (for the treatment group) or at the point of identification for the comparison group (for the comparison group). All data are combined for the treatment and comparison groups in this report.

- Over 80 percent of sample members had children under the age of 18. Within couples, men were significantly more likely to have children (and tended to have more children) than their female partners.
- The average age of the men’s children was 8.0 years. For women, the average age of children was 7.6 years.

**Exhibit 2-1. Age, Relationship, Parental, and Child Characteristics**

	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
Age (mean)***	33.5 years	32.4 years
Relationship status		
Married	26%	25%
In a nonmarried intimate relationship***	69%	61%
In a coparenting relationship only***	5%	14%
Has children under 18***	87%	81%
Number of children (mean)***	3.1	2.4
Average age of children***	8.0 years	7.6 years

Note: \*= $p < 0.05$ , \*\*= $p < 0.01$ , and \*\*\*= $p < 0.001$  for matched pair t-test of differences between male and female respondents in each couple.

### *Racial and Ethnic Background*

The racial and ethnic background of the sample is shown in **Exhibit 2-2**. The data show that over half the male sample members were Black and just over a quarter were White. Among the female sample, just under half were Black and 38 percent were White. Just under 10 percent of men and women were Hispanic.

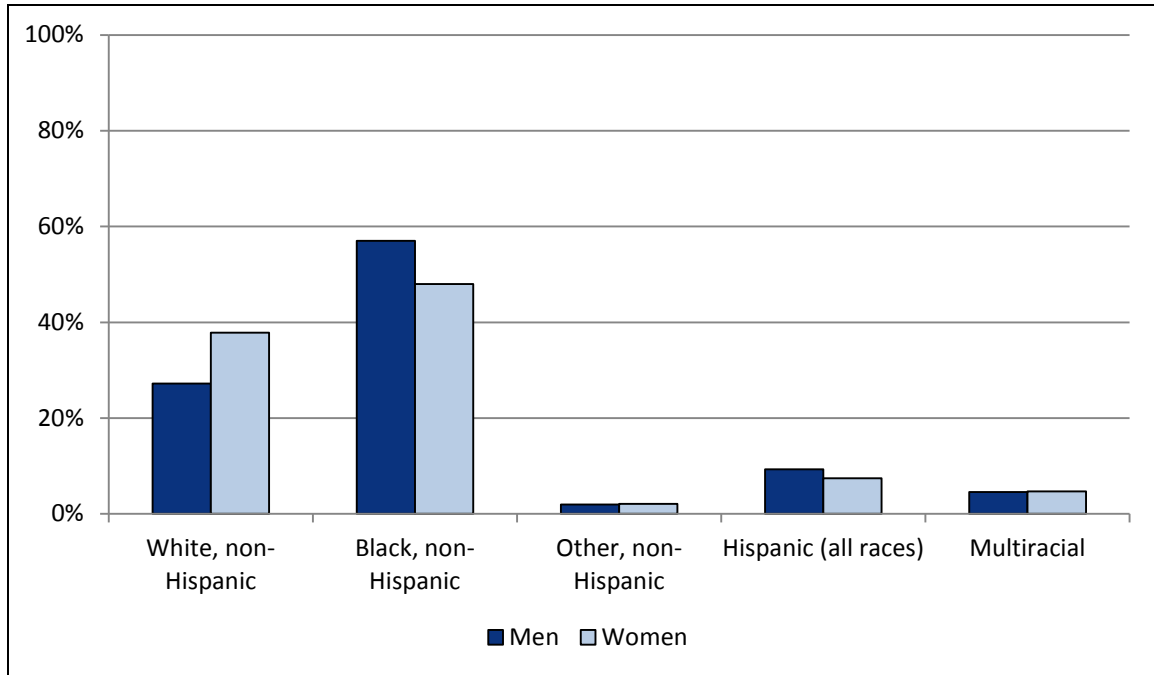
The vast majority of the study sample was born in the United States; only three percent of men and women were born outside the country (data not shown).

Compared to BJS estimates of the racial/ethnic background of fathers in prison, the MFS-IP study sample contains a higher proportion of Black men and lower proportions of White and Hispanic men. BJS data for fathers in state prisons nationwide show that:

- 34 percent are White (non-Hispanic),
- 41 percent are Black (non-Hispanic),
- 18 percent are Hispanic, and
- Nine percent are other races (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008).



**Exhibit 2-2. Ethnic and Racial Background**



Notes: “Other” races include American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, Asian, or “some other race.” Of respondents classified as multiracial, most were Black and American Indian, White and American Indian, or Black and White. Matched pair t-tests were not conducted for race/ethnicity.

*Education and Learning*

We administered a learning problems scale in the baseline interviews that assessed respondents’ perceptions of their performance as children in school and their current speed and level of difficulty in doing math, writing, and reading in their daily lives.<sup>9</sup> A higher score reflects more learning problems, and the maximum score is 23. The mean learning problems score among the study sample was 6.0 for men and 4.8 for women. Within couples, men’s learning problems scores were significantly higher than those of their female partners ( $p < 0.001$ ). Overall, 42 percent of men and 23 percent of women reported having repeated a grade, and 81 percent of men and 47 percent of women reported having gotten suspended or

BJS data for fathers in state prisons nationwide show that 11 percent report having a learning disability (unpublished analyses conducted on the 2004 Survey of Inmates in State and Federal Correctional Facilities).

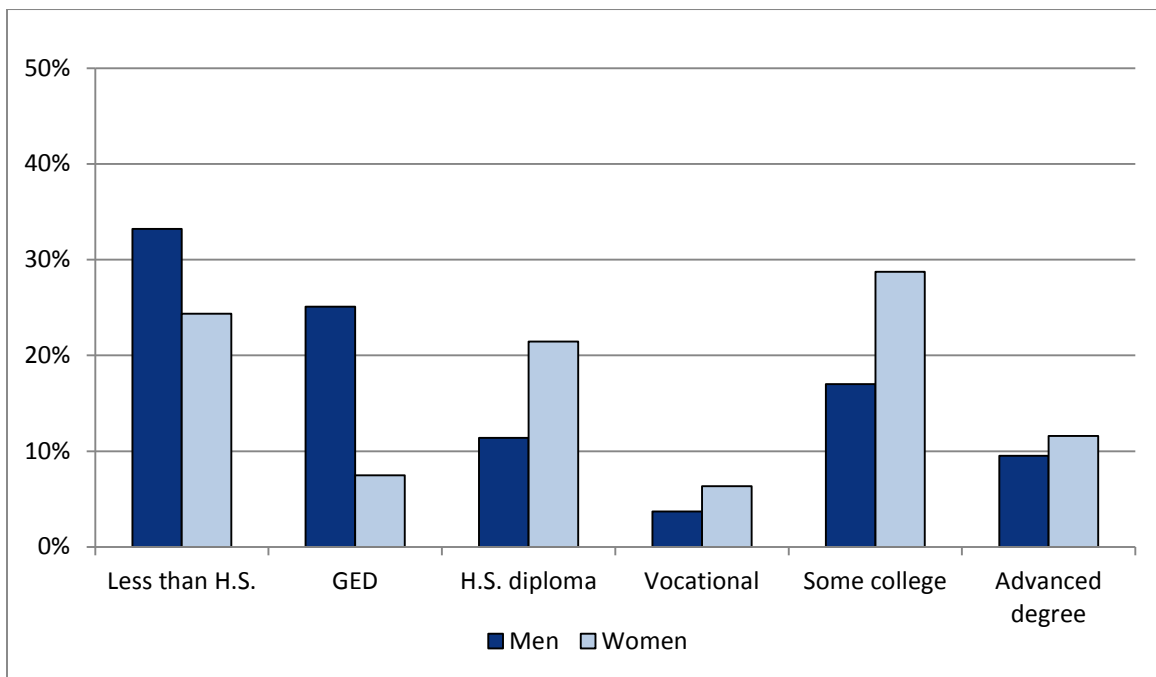
<sup>9</sup> The learning problems scale was modified from the Wender Adult Questionnaire-Childhood Characteristics scale (Wender, 1985). Respondents were asked about “doing math in your daily life, such as figuring out a tip, adding up bills, or counting change,” “reading a newspaper or magazine,” and “writing, such as writing letters and filling out forms.” For math, reading, and writing, respondents were asked two sets of questions. One asked them to rate the difficulty level (very easy, pretty easy, pretty hard, very hard), and the other asked them to rate their speed (very fast, pretty fast, pretty slow, very slow). The other items in the learning problems scale asked respondents the extent to which they agreed (using a Likert scale) that “as a child in school, overall you were a good student,” whether they ever repeated any grades, and whether they were ever suspended or expelled.

expelled from school in their childhood. Within couples, men were less likely than their female partners to rate themselves as good students and more likely to have reported repeating a grade and getting suspended or expelled from school ( $p$  for all differences  $<0.001$ ).

**Exhibit 2-3** shows the highest educational attainment for the male and female samples. Two-thirds of the men had at least a high school diploma or GED, which is similar to national estimates (see sidebar). More men reported obtaining a GED than a high school diploma. Thirty percent of the men had at least some vocational training or college education, but very few men (10%) had completed an advanced degree. Among the female sample, just under a quarter (24%) did not have a GED or high school diploma, and more women reported obtaining a high school diploma than a GED. Just under half of the women (47%) reported some vocational training or college courses, but only 12 percent had completed an advanced degree. Within study couples, women were significantly more likely than their male partners to have completed any education past the high school/GED level ( $p < 0.001$ ).

Nationally representative data suggest that 62 percent of fathers in state prisons have at least a high school diploma or GED upon their admission to prison (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008).

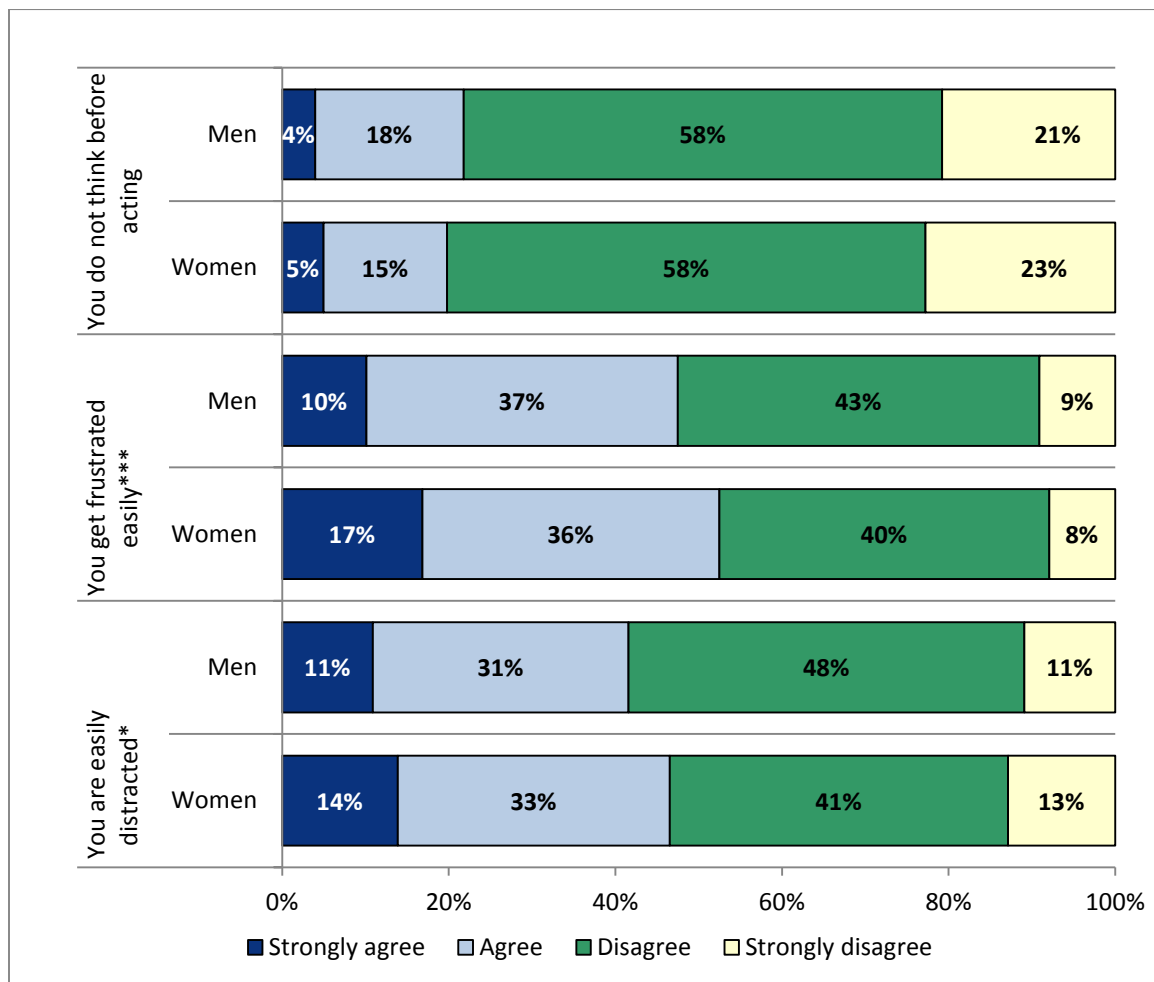
**Exhibit 2-3. Highest Educational Attainment**



*Personal Characteristics and Attitudes*

We documented symptoms of attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in the baseline interviews.<sup>10</sup> As shown in **Exhibit 2-4**, many respondents reported symptoms of distractibility and impulsivity; within couples, men were less likely than their female partners to agree that they are easily distracted and get frustrated easily. When we scaled the ADHD items (on a scale ranging from 0 to 9, where higher values indicate more symptoms of distractibility and impulsivity), the average scores were 3.9 for men and 4.1 for women. Within couples, men scored significantly lower than their female partners ( $p < 0.01$ ), indicating less distractibility and impulsivity.

**Exhibit 2-4. Distractibility and Impulsivity**



Note: \* =  $p < 0.05$ , \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ , and \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$  for matched pair t-test of differences between male and female respondents in each couple.

<sup>10</sup> A modified version of the Copeland Symptom Checklist for Attention Deficit Disorders was administered (Copeland, 1989). Respondents were asked to use a Likert scale to reflect the extent to which they agreed with three statements reflecting distractibility and impulsivity.

We also assessed dimensions of readiness for change, including goal orientation and self-efficacy. Goal orientation was measured by a two-item scale reflecting the extent to which the respondent has goals to achieve and believes in the importance of planning out where he/she is going.<sup>11</sup> The scale ranges from 0 to 6, and higher values indicate greater goal orientation. Self-efficacy measures respondents' perceptions of the extent of control they have over their lives.<sup>12</sup> The scale ranges from 0 to 9, and higher values indicate greater self-efficacy.

Baseline mean scores on these scales are shown in **Exhibit 2-5**. Within couples, men were significantly more goal oriented and had higher self-efficacy than their partners. These differences may not be large enough to be meaningful, despite their statistical significance.

**Exhibit 2-5. Readiness for Change**

	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
Goal orientation, mean score (range 0–6)***	5.0	4.7
Self-efficacy, mean score (range 0–9)***	6.0	5.8

Note: \* =  $p < 0.05$ , \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ , and \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$  for matched pair t-test of differences between male and female respondents in each couple.

*Criminal History*

All men in the study were incarcerated in a state prison at the time of their baseline interview. Most of the men had extensive criminal histories, as shown in **Exhibit 2-6**. **Appendix B** shows site-level variability in criminal history among the sample.

**Exhibit 2-6. Men's Self-Reported Criminal History**

Number of arrests (mean)	12.1
Number of previous adult incarcerations (mean)	5.7
Number of convictions (mean)	5.1
Any juvenile incarceration	53.0%
(if yes) Number of juvenile incarcerations (mean)	3.6

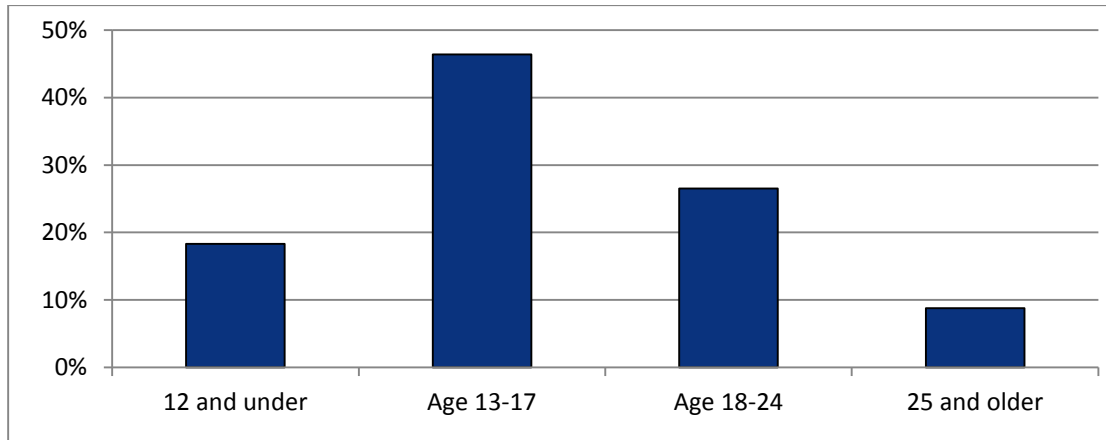
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<sup>11</sup> Goal orientation was measured by two items adopted from Taylor and Seeman (1999), in which respondents use a Likert scale to indicate the extent to which they agree with the following statements: "It's important for you to take time to plan out where you're going in life" and "You have many goals that you will work to achieve."

<sup>12</sup> Self-efficacy was measured by three items adopted from the Multi-Site Evaluation of the Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative offender instrument (Lattimore & Steffey, 2009). Respondents use a Likert scale to indicate the extent to which they agree with the following statements: "You can do just about anything if you really set your mind to it," "Sometimes you feel like you're being pushed around in your life," and "You often feel helpless dealing with the problems of life."

Data on the men’s age at first arrest are shown in **Exhibit 2-7**. On average, the men were first arrested when they were just under 17 years of age, and 65 percent were arrested as minors.

**Exhibit 2-7. Men’s Age at First Arrest**



Nearly half (47%) of the women reported having ever been arrested and 28 percent reported having ever been incarcerated. Only 20 women (1%) were incarcerated at the time of their baseline interview. Among the total female sample, the average number of arrests was 1.4 (compared with men’s average of 12.1), and the average number of convictions was 0.7 (compared with 5.1 for men). Within couples, women had significantly fewer arrests and convictions than their male partners ( $p < 0.001$  for both measures).

## Men’s Pre-Incarceration Characteristics

### *Housing*

During the six months prior to their baseline incarceration, nearly all of the men in the sample primarily lived either in their own homes or apartments (49%) or in someone else’s (46%). The remaining men were either homeless (0.8%), in transitional or halfway houses (0.7%), in residential treatment (0.5%), in motels or rooming houses (1.6%), or in some other housing situation (1.7%).

Many men reported that they lived with others before incarceration, including

- their spouse or romantic partner (66%);
- their children (51%);
- their mother (15%), father (7%), sisters (6%), brothers (6%), or other relatives; and
- friends (7%), ex-spouses/partners (8%), or others (6%).

### Employment

Well over half of the men (61%) reported that they were employed at some point during the six months prior to their incarceration. Characteristics of the men's most recent job<sup>13</sup> are shown in **Exhibit 2-8**. Of the men who had ever had a job, nearly three-quarters reported that their most recent job was full time and provided formal pay. Self-employment was reported by 10 percent of men, and casual/"off the books" pay was reported by 16 percent of men. Few jobs provided paid leave or health insurance coverage.

**Exhibit 2-8. Characteristics of Men's Most Recent Job**

Job was full time	74%
Job provided formal pay	74%
Monthly earnings (mean)	\$1,907
Job provided health insurance coverage	35%
Job provided fully paid leave	32%

### Substance Use

Men reported fairly high alcohol abuse and use of other drugs during the six months prior to their incarceration: 63 percent reported binge drinking,<sup>14</sup> 71 percent reported using at least one illicit drug (including marijuana), and 43 percent reported using at least one illicit drug other than marijuana. Eighty-five percent reported both binge drinking and illicit drug use. **Exhibit 2-9** illustrates substance-specific patterns as the percentage of the total male sample that reported binge drinking or using an illicit drug at least once during the six months prior to incarceration.

Among men who used alcohol and/or other drugs prior to incarceration, a large proportion reported problems associated with their use:

- 71 percent of drug users and 56 percent of those who had consumed any alcohol felt that they should cut down on their use.

Data from the 2013 National Survey on Drug Use and Health classify 44 percent of men aged 18-25 as binge alcohol users within the past 30 days. Illicit drug use data for men aged 12 and older show that 11.4 percent reported any illicit drug use within the past 30 days. Substance-specific data reveal that 9.7 percent reported marijuana use, 0.8 percent reported cocaine use, and 0.7 percent reported use of hallucinogens (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014).

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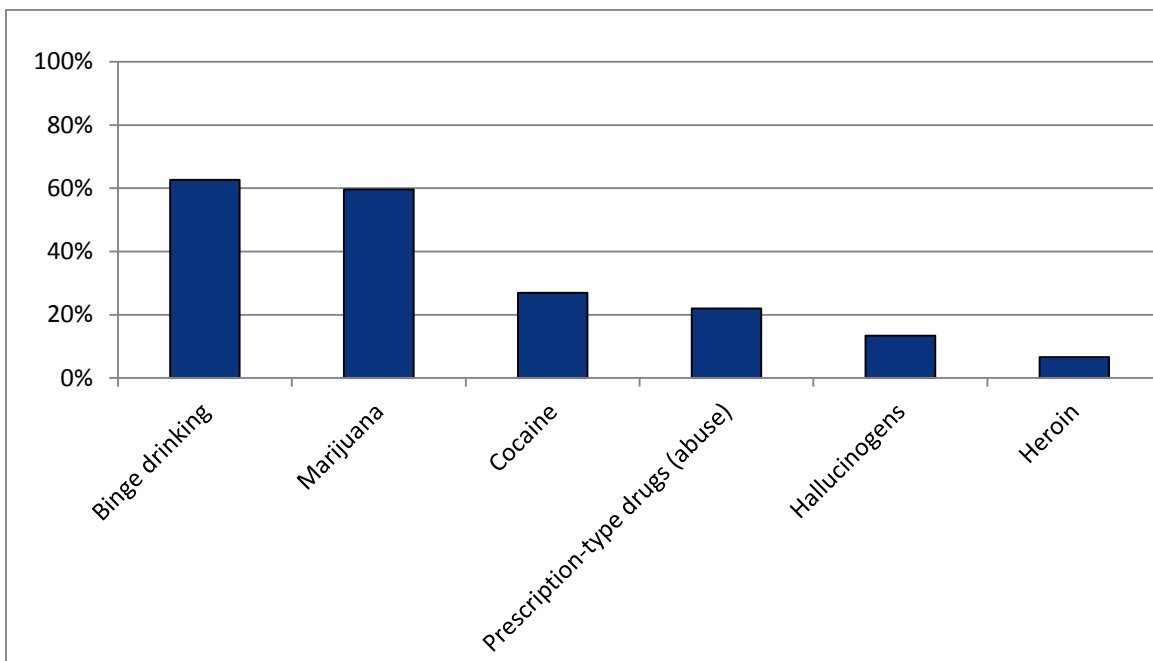
<sup>13</sup> The men's most recent job may not necessarily have been held in the six months prior to incarceration. Ninety-one percent of the men reported having a job at some point in their lives, but only 61 percent were working in the six months prior to incarceration.

<sup>14</sup> Binge drinking was defined as having five or more drinks on the same occasion.

- 61 percent of drug users and 40 percent of those who had consumed alcohol felt bad or guilty about their use.
- Of those who used drugs and/or consumed alcohol, 19 percent reported that they often experienced problems with anger when they used drugs or drank alcohol. Thirty-three percent sometimes experienced this problem, 25 percent rarely experienced this problem, and 22 percent never experienced this problem.

BJS reports that 67 percent of incarcerated parents met criteria for substance abuse or dependence prior to their incarceration (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008).

**Exhibit 2-9. Men’s Substance Use before Incarceration**



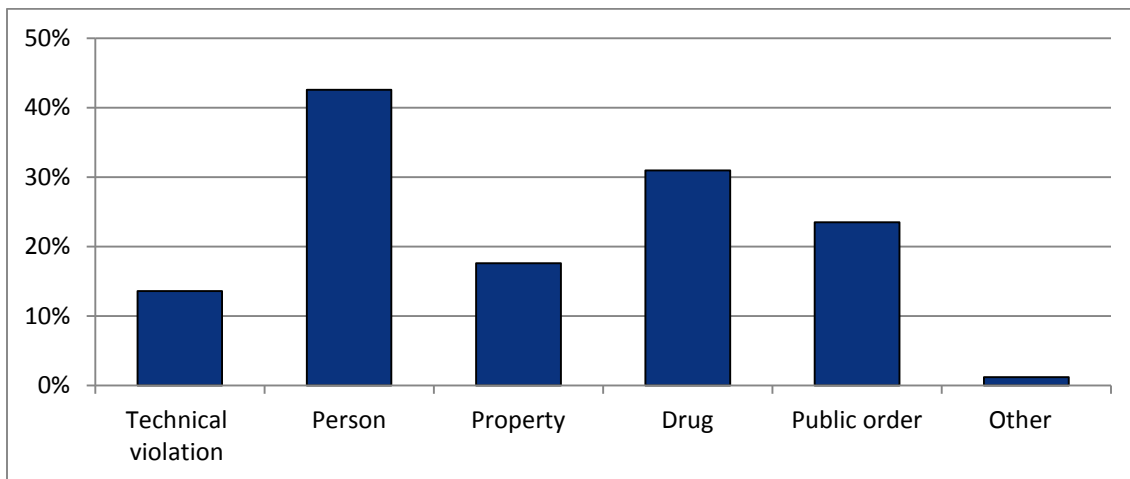
## Men's Incarceration Characteristics

**Exhibit 2-10** lists characteristics of the offenses for which male sample members were incarcerated. The most common offenses were person offenses (reported by 43 percent of the men), such as robbery, homicide, and assault. Drug offenses, including dealing and possession, were reported by 31 percent of the men. Public order offenses, which include weapons offenses, driving while intoxicated/driving under influence, and criminal justice order interference, were reported by 24 percent of the men. Just fewer than 14 percent reported that they were serving time because of a technical violation, and 18 percent reported a property offense. Since men could report multiple offense types for the same incarceration, responses sum to more than 100%. (The Carson & Sabol figures reported in the text box are based on National Corrections Reporting Program data in which only one offense per sample member is tabulated.)

Among nationally representative samples of men incarcerated in state prisons, the most common offenses are

- person offenses—37%,
  - drug crimes—18%,
  - property crimes—18%, and
  - public order—10%
- (Carson & Sabol, 2012).

### Exhibit 2-10. Offense Type for Men's Current Incarceration



About a fifth of the sample (22%) was incarcerated for more than one offense type. Most of these reported two offense types. Only three percent reported three offense types and 0.4 percent reported four.

Characteristics of the men's current incarceration are shown in **Exhibit 2-11**. On average, the men had served 3.4 years at the time they were interviewed and expected to serve an additional three years. However, as shown in **Appendix B**, substantial variability is evident in incarceration characteristics across sites. Nearly all men (99%) expected to be released from their current incarceration at some point.



**Exhibit 2-11. Men’s Incarceration Characteristics**

Time served to date (mean)	3.4 years
Expected total duration of incarceration (mean)	6.5 years
Number of disciplinary infractions (mean)	2.9
Number of days in administrative segregation (mean)	47 days
Number of transfers (mean)	2.0

**Policy Context Highlights**

**Education levels were low, particularly for men, and many sample members reported learning difficulties.** About a third of the men and a quarter of the women did not have a GED or high school degree. Only 30 percent of the men and 47 percent of the women reported any education beyond high school. Men’s self-reported difficulties with reading, writing, and math were more substantial than those of their partners.

**Most men were employed prior to incarceration.** The majority of the men (61%) reported that they were employed at some point during the six months prior to their incarceration. Of these, three-quarters (74%) held full-time work with formal pay, while few reported self-employment or “off the books” employment.

**An extensive criminal history was common among the study sample.** Men reported an average of 12.1 prior arrests and 5.7 previous adult incarcerations. On average, the men were first arrested when they were just under 17 years of age, and 65 percent were arrested as minors.

**Substance abuse is a major issue among this population.** During the six months prior to their incarceration, 63 percent of men reported binge drinking and 71 percent reported using at least one illicit drug (including marijuana). Of those who drank alcohol and/or used drugs, more than half (53%) reported that they often or sometimes experienced anger problems when they used drugs or alcohol. The majority of both drug and alcohol users felt that they should cut down on their use.

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# Chapter 3. Couple Relationships

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This chapter presents men’s and women’s reports of their relationship dynamics before and during the male partner’s incarceration. Baseline interviews with 1,482 couples assessed the history of their relationships prior to the men’s incarceration and relationship quality and challenges during incarceration.

## Relationship History

### *Relationship Status and Duration*

Relationship status and marital history are shown in **Exhibit 3-1**. As noted in **Chapter 2**, most sample members (69 percent of men and 61 percent of women) reported being in committed intimate relationships with their study partners, one-quarter were married, and a smaller number (five percent of men and 14 percent of women) reported being in coparenting relationships only. Within couples, the male partner was significantly more likely than the female partner to describe the couple’s relationship as romantic, whereas significantly more female partners than male partners characterized it as a coparenting relationship only.

**Exhibit 3-1. Relationship Status and Marital History**

	Men	Women
Status of relationship with study partner		
Married	26%	25%
In an intimate relationship***	69%	61%
In a coparenting relationship only***	5%	14%
Marital history		
Ever married	44%	44%
Average number of times married	1.4	1.4
Among those ever married, ever divorced	48%	52%
Average number of times divorced	1.3	1.4

Note: \*= p < 0.05, \*\*= p < 0.01, and \*\*\*= p < 0.001 for matched pair t-test of differences between male and female respondents in each couple.

Men’s and women’s marital histories were similar: 44 percent reported ever being married (to anyone), and about half of those who had ever married reported ever divorcing.

Most study couples reported being in serious, long-term relationships with one another. Relationships tended to be of fairly long duration—men reported an average relationship length of 7.7 years and women reported 7.0 years. Within couples, men characterized the relationships as significantly longer in duration than their partners ( $p <$

0.001). Most men (86%) and women (82%) reported having no other partners outside their relationship with their study partner. (Within couples, differences in men's and women's reports of having other partners were not statistically significant.)

### *Couples' Lives before Incarceration*

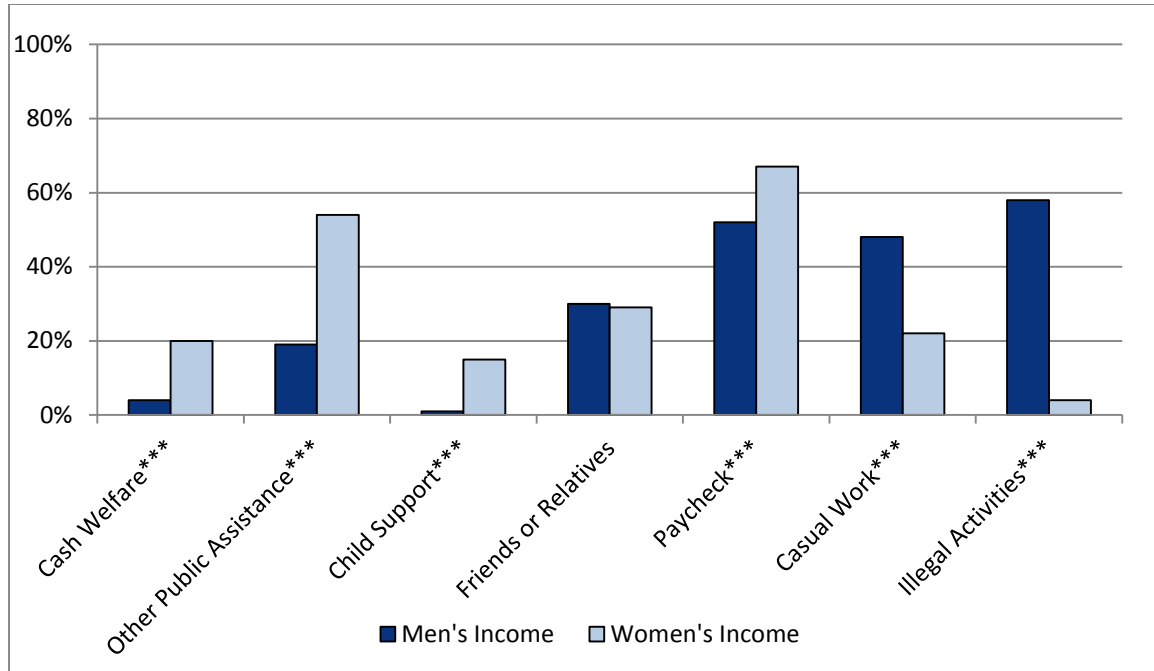
Most respondents (83 percent of men and 81 percent of women) reported being in relationships with their study partners prior to the incarceration. Over half (63 percent of men and 59 percent of women) said they lived with their partners at some point in the six months prior to the incarceration. Within couples, men were significantly more likely than their female partners to report co-residence prior to the incarceration ( $p < 0.001$ ).

Over half of men (68%) and women (55%) reported that they shared incomes with their partners prior to the incarceration. Within couples, men were significantly more likely than women to report sharing incomes ( $p < 0.001$ ). **Exhibit 3-2** shows the percentages of men and women who received any of their own income from each potential income source during the six months prior to the incarceration. The most common sources of income among men were illegal activity, a formal paycheck, casual work, and money from friends or relatives. Among women, the most common sources of income included a formal paycheck, public assistance (other than cash welfare),<sup>15</sup> money from friends and relatives, casual work, and cash welfare.<sup>16</sup> Within couples, women cited several sources of income more often than their male partners, including a paycheck, child support, public assistance (other than welfare), and cash welfare. In contrast, illegal activities and casual work were more often cited as sources of income by men ( $p$  for all differences  $< 0.001$ ).

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<sup>15</sup> In the interview, respondents were informed that other public assistance included food stamp benefits, support from the Indian Health Service, disability insurance such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), or unemployment insurance benefits (UI).

<sup>16</sup> In the interview, respondents were informed that cash welfare was also known as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

**Exhibit 3-2. Sources of Income before Incarceration**

Note: \* =  $p < 0.05$ , \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ , and \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$  for matched pair t-test of differences between male and female respondents in each couple.

Respondents who reported sharing an income with their partners were also asked about the partners' incomes. Within couples, the female partner was significantly less likely to report that the male partner had illegal income than their male partner was to self-report having had illegal income ( $p < 0.001$ , data not shown). Men were less likely to cite public assistance as a source of income for their partners than their female partners were to report it for themselves ( $p < 0.001$ , data not shown).

Domestic Violence

Rates of physical and emotional abuse perpetration and victimization within the study couples during the six months prior to the male partner's incarceration were notable (**Exhibit 3-3**), particularly for a short reference period with a single partner.<sup>17,18</sup> As shown in the exhibit, several differences between male and female partners within couples are evident.<sup>19</sup> Site-specific rates of abuse are shown in **Appendix B**.

Because men and women were both asked about victimization and perpetration within the couple, it was possible to look at the congruence between these reports. This type of analysis reveals whether, if one member of a couple reports a certain type of victimization, the other member of the couple reports that same type of perpetration. The results of these analyses showed agreement for couple member's reports of any physical abuse and any emotional abuse within the relationship.<sup>20</sup> In other words, when one member of the

**Exhibit 3-3. Physical and Emotional Abuse before Incarceration**

	Men	Women
Any physical abuse		
Perpetration***	38%	46%
Victimization*	45%	40%
Any emotional abuse		
Perpetration	34%	33%
Victimization*	34%	36%
Severe physical or sexual abuse		
Perpetration*	9%	6%
Victimization***	10%	17%
Frequent emotional abuse		
Perpetration	10%	12%
Victimization***	13%	17%
Frequent physical abuse		
Perpetration***	6%	10%
Victimization	14%	13%

Note: \*= p < 0.05, \*\*= p < 0.01, and \*\*\*= p < 0.001 for matched pair t-test of differences between male and female respondents in each couple.

<sup>17</sup> Both members of each study couple were asked to complete a shortened version of the revised Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS2) during independent interviews. These items elicited information on the number of times each respondent had perpetrated a given behavior and the number of times he/she was victimized by his/her survey partner in that manner during the six months prior to the male partner's incarceration. Analyses excluded men whose partners did not complete the baseline interview and couples who were not in a relationship prior to the incarceration (who were not asked these questions).

<sup>18</sup> For a complete discussion of domestic violence in the MFS-IP sample, see McKay, Bir, Lindquist, Steffey, Keyes, & Siegel (2013). Frequencies reported here differ slightly from frequencies reported there because of the difference in the sample used.

<sup>19</sup> Because a shortened version of the CTS2 was used, this study is not able to address any differences in the consequences of abuse perpetrated by men versus abuse perpetrated by women. However, other studies indicate that partner violence has a greater impact on female victims than on male victims (e.g., National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 2011).

<sup>20</sup> The composite measures of "any physical abuse" and "any emotional abuse" were created by combining responses to sets of behaviorally specific items involving each respective type of abuse. (For example, "How many times did

couple—whether male or female—reported experiencing any physical abuse victimization, the other member of the couple reported that he/she had perpetrated physical abuse. Conversely, when one member of the couple (regardless of sex) reported that he/she had perpetrated physical abuse, the other member of the couple reported that he/she had experienced physical abuse victimization. The same was true for emotional abuse.

When it came to frequent<sup>21</sup> and severe abuse, however, there were significant incongruences. Reports within couples did not agree for frequent physical abuse, frequent emotional abuse, and severe physical or sexual abuse. The source of incongruence was usually one member of the couple reporting experiencing a type of abuse, but the other member of the couple not reporting perpetrating that type of abuse. This suggests potential underreporting of frequent and severe abuse perpetration. This pattern held regardless of whether the abuse was experienced by the male or female member or perpetrated by the male or female member.

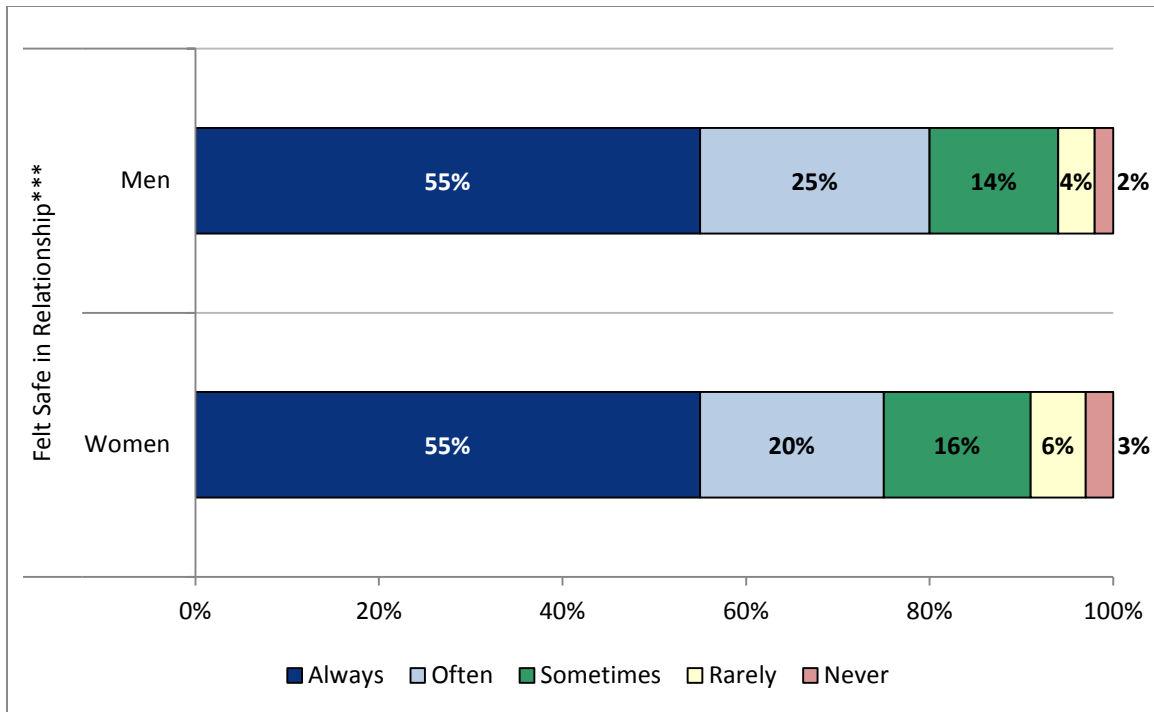
On the basis of composite measures incorporating both partners' reports, among couples who were in relationships during the six months prior to incarceration, 34 percent reported no physical abuse. These were couples in which neither member reported either victimization or perpetration of physical abuse. Twenty-one percent of couples reported unilateral violence and 45 percent reported bilateral violence during that same period. ("Unilateral violence" refers to situations in which one member of a couple reportedly physically abused the other, on the basis of either partner's report, and "bilateral violence" refers to situations in which each member of the study couple reportedly physically abused the other, on the basis of either partner's report. "Bilateral" does not imply equivalence or symmetry in the use or experience of violence by each partner.) In couples reporting bilateral violence, perceptions of safety are shown in **Exhibit 3-4**. While similar proportions of men and women reported that they always or never felt safe, fewer women than men often felt safe and more rarely or sometimes felt safe. Within couples, female partners felt safe less often than their male counterparts ( $p < 0.001$ ).

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you push, shove, hit, slap, or grab your partner?" was a contributing variable to the composite measure, "Any physical abuse perpetration.") There was often agreement on the composite measures, despite many statistically significant incongruences between men's and women's reports on the individual behavior items.

<sup>21</sup> Frequent emotional abuse was defined as six or more incidents of emotional abuse during the six-month reference period. Frequent physical abuse was also defined as six or more incidents during the reference period.

**Exhibit 3-4. Perceptions of Safety in Relationship before Incarceration**



Note: \*= p < 0.05, \*\*= p < 0.01, and \*\*\*= p < 0.001 for matched pair t-test of differences between male and female respondents in each couple.

## Relationship Quality and Challenges

### *Perceived Relationship Quality*

Men and women tended to assess the current status of their relationships positively along a variety of dimensions, including communication, bonding, conflict resolution, and overall happiness. Men and women overwhelmingly agreed with the statement, “You and your partner have fun together,” but within couples, men were significantly more likely to agree with that statement than their partners ( $p < 0.001$ ). When asked to rate their current happiness with the relationship on a scale of 0 to 9, men provided an average rating of 7.3 compared with an average 6.7 among women.<sup>22</sup> Within couples, men’s ratings were significantly higher than those of their partners ( $p < 0.001$ ).

### *Communication*

When couples were asked about their communication patterns, men’s and women’s reports both suggested that women tended to do more interrupting. Within couples, the female partner reported waiting for the other partner to finish talking before

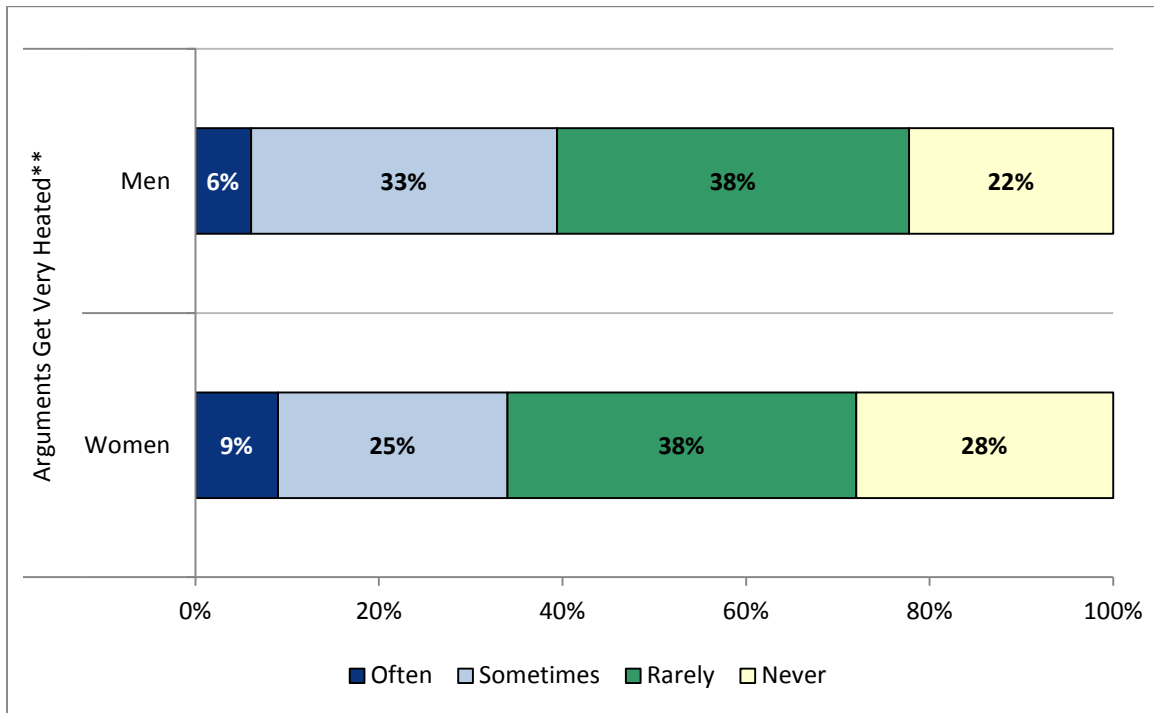
<sup>22</sup> This overall happiness item (one of the eight items in the DAS-8) is often scaled from 1 to 10. For this analysis, it was scaled from 0 to 9 for consistency with other scales reported here.



responding less often than the male partner did ( $p < 0.01$ ), and the male partner reported being interrupted more often than the female partner ( $p < 0.001$ ).

The frequency with which arguments within the couple got very heated, on the basis of men’s and women’s reports, is shown in **Exhibit 3-5**. Within couples, men reported that arguments got very heated significantly more often than their partners ( $p < 0.01$ ).

**Exhibit 3-5. Arguments Get Very Heated**

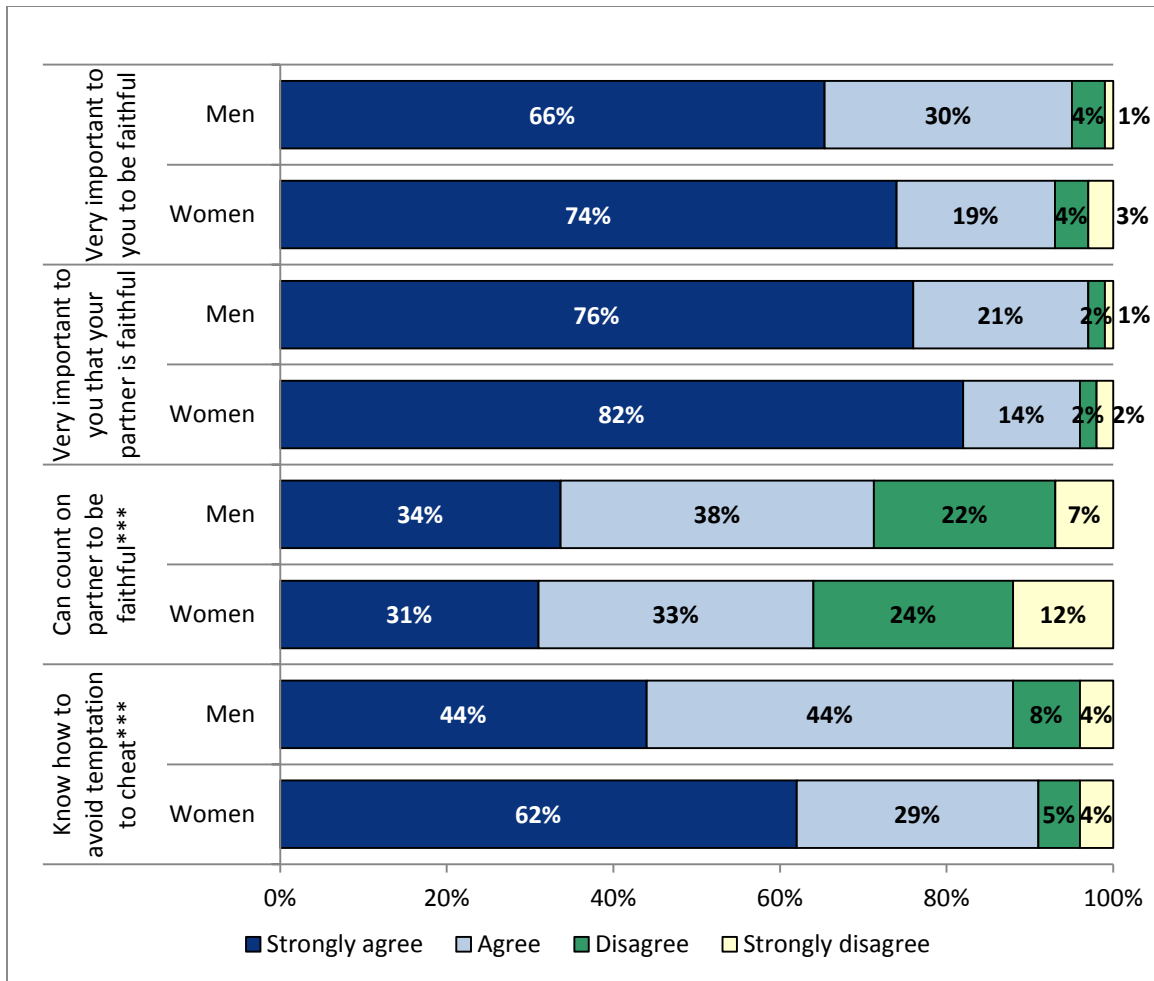


Note: \* =  $p < 0.05$ , \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ , and \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$  for matched pair t-test of differences between male and female respondents in each couple.

### Fidelity

Attitudes toward fidelity are presented in **Exhibit 3-6**. Both men and women believed in the importance of their own and their partner’s fidelity. However, respondents of both sexes generally rated the importance of their partners’ fidelity significantly more highly than the importance of their *own* fidelity ( $p < 0.001$  for both differences, data not shown). Respondents also appeared to have substantial doubts about their partners’ faithfulness. Just 34 percent of men and 31 percent of women strongly agreed that they could count on their partners to be faithful. Within couples, men agreed more strongly than women that they could count on their partners to be faithful ( $p < 0.001$ ).

**Exhibit 3-6. Fidelity Attitudes**



Note: \* =  $p < 0.05$ , \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ , and \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$  for matched pair t-test of differences between male and female respondents in each couple.

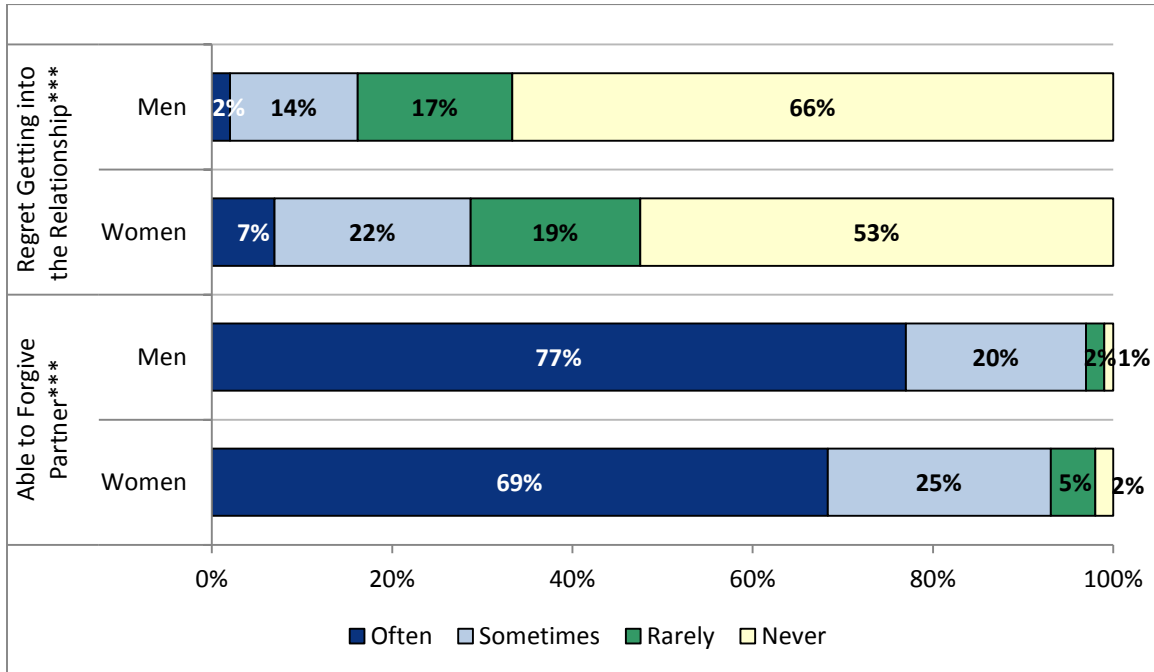
Respondents' fidelity concerns appeared to have some basis in reality, particularly for women. As shown in **Exhibit 3-6**, within couples, women were significantly more likely than men to strongly agree that they knew how to avoid situations where they might be tempted to cheat ( $p < 0.001$ ). Further, just 42 percent of men stated that they had never had sexual/romantic contact with someone else during their current relationship, compared with 65 percent of women. Within couples, women were significantly more likely than men to report that they had never been unfaithful to their survey partner ( $p < 0.001$ , data not shown). In addition, men reported feeling tempted to be unfaithful significantly more often than their female partners ( $p < 0.001$ , data not shown).

### *Regret and Forgiveness*

Respondents' feelings about regret and forgiveness are shown in **Exhibit 3-7**. Although most respondents reported that they never regretted getting into their current relationships, within couples, women reported that they had some regrets about the

relationship more often than men did ( $p < 0.001$ ). Similarly, female partners indicated being able to forgive less often than their male counterparts ( $p < 0.001$ ).

**Exhibit 3-7. Regret and Forgiveness**



Note: \* =  $p < 0.05$ , \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ , and \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$  for matched pair t-test of differences between male and female respondents in each couple.

### Resilience

Men and women expressed high optimism when asked about the resilience of their relationships. Within couples, men were typically more optimistic than their female partners:

- When asked to respond to the statement, “Your relationship can handle whatever conflicts arise in the future,” both 32 percent of men and women agreed, but 63 percent of men and 58 percent of women strongly agreed. Within couples, men agreed with this statement more strongly than women ( $p < 0.001$ ).
- When asked to respond to the statement, “You feel good about your chances to make this relationship work for a lifetime,” 65 percent of men strongly agreed and 28 percent agreed, while 59 percent of women strongly agreed and 26 percent agreed. Within couples, men agreed with this statement more strongly than women ( $p < 0.001$ ).

- When asked how frequently they had discussed ending their current relationships, 10 percent of women and four percent of men reported that they had often discussed ending their current relationships. Within couples, men reported less frequent discussions of ending the relationship than women ( $p < 0.001$ ).

Couples expressed some uncertainty regarding how their own and their partners' situations would change if the couple split up. A small proportion (three percent of men and eight percent of women) felt that their overall happiness would improve; about half (51 percent of men and 44 percent of women) felt that their happiness would worsen; and a sizable minority (36 percent of men and 35 percent of women) said they could not predict.

## Relationship Experiences during Incarceration

### *Relationship Concerns during Incarceration*

Although most respondents had positive assessments of their relationships (see "Relationship Quality" above), they also tended to report many relationship concerns during the incarceration. Just 13 percent of men and seven percent of women reported that they had no concerns about their relationships during the incarceration. Within couples, the male partner was more likely than his female partner to report having no concerns about the relationship ( $p < 0.001$ ).

The specific concerns expressed by men and women about the couple's relationship are shown in **Exhibit 3-8**. Although all potential concerns were asked of both men and women in a parallel format (e.g., "She is worried about your lifestyle while in prison," and "You are worried about his lifestyle while in prison"), there was minimal overlap between the top concerns among male and female respondents. Within couples, men were more likely than women to express concerns about their place in their partners'

### **Exhibit 3-8. Top Relationship Concerns during Incarceration**

	Men	Women
Uncertainty about male partner's place in female partner's life***	46%	37%
Concern that time in prison will make couple drift apart***	42%	33%
Uncertainty about whether other partner will get involved with someone else***	39%	18%
Concerns about male partner's lifestyle while in prison***	26%	37%
Prison makes it hard for male partner to open up or get close	22%	16%
Female partner sometimes can't accept male partner's calls***	9%	48%
Female partner may not be able to forgive male partner***	17%	28%

Note: \* =  $p < 0.05$ , \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ , and \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$  for matched pair t-test of differences between male and female respondents in each couple.

lives, the possibility of prison making the couple drift apart, and the other partner getting involved with someone else. In contrast, women were more likely than men to express concern about the male partner's lifestyle in prison, her inability to accept his calls, and her ability to forgive him.

Among men who specified another concern not included among the response options (8%), the most common concerns were finances and their own or their partners' health and welfare. Among women who indicated having other concerns (8%), the most common were potential changes in their partners or the relationship and concerns about their own or their partners' health and welfare.

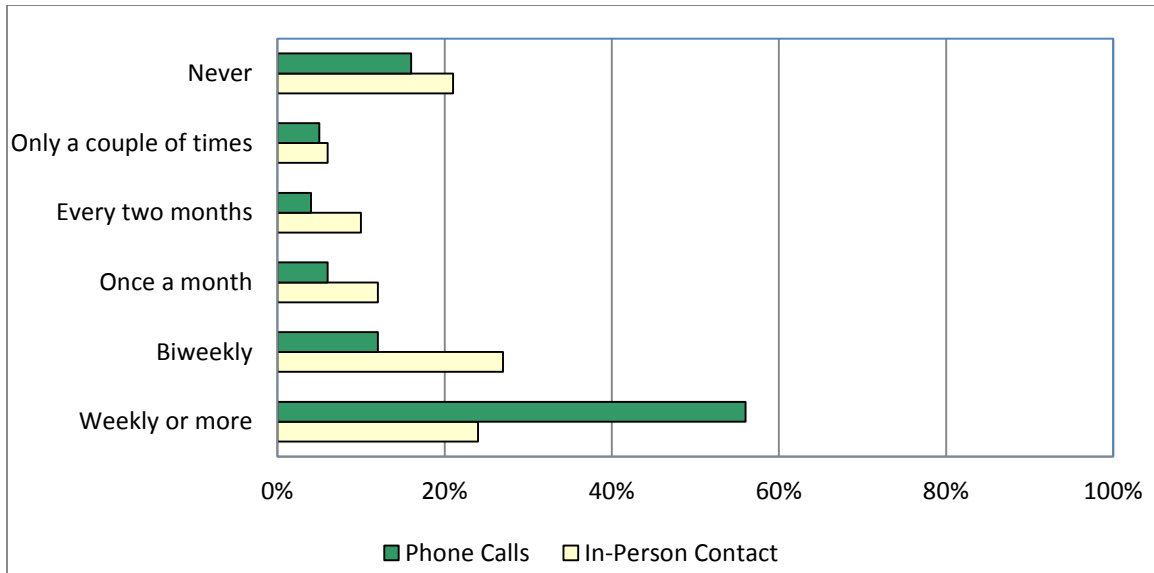
### *Contact during Incarceration*

Respondents placed a great deal of importance on having contact during the male partner's incarceration: 84 percent of men and 75 percent of women strongly agreed that "Keeping in touch with your partner during this incarceration is very important to you." Within couples, men agreed with this statement more strongly than women ( $p < 0.001$ ).

Letter writing represented the most common form of contact during the incarceration, with 68 percent of men reporting that they sent mail to their partners at least once a week, and 55 percent reporting that they received mail from their partners at least once a week.

Frequency of telephone and in-person contact, which varied widely, is shown in **Exhibit 3-9**. Although 56 percent of men reported talking to their partners on the telephone one or more times a week, 16 percent reported never talking to their partners on the telephone during the current incarceration. Similarly, 51 percent of male respondents indicated receiving personal visits from their partners at least biweekly, and 21 percent reported never receiving personal visits from their partners during the incarceration. Variation in in-person and phone contact by site is presented in **Appendix B**.

**Exhibit 3-9. Men's Reports of Frequency of Phone and In-Person Contact with Partners during Incarceration**



Men's and women's perceptions of the biggest barriers to contact with one another are shown in **Exhibit 3-10**.

Within couples, women were more likely to perceive the location and unpleasantness of the prison setting as barriers to contact than their male partners.

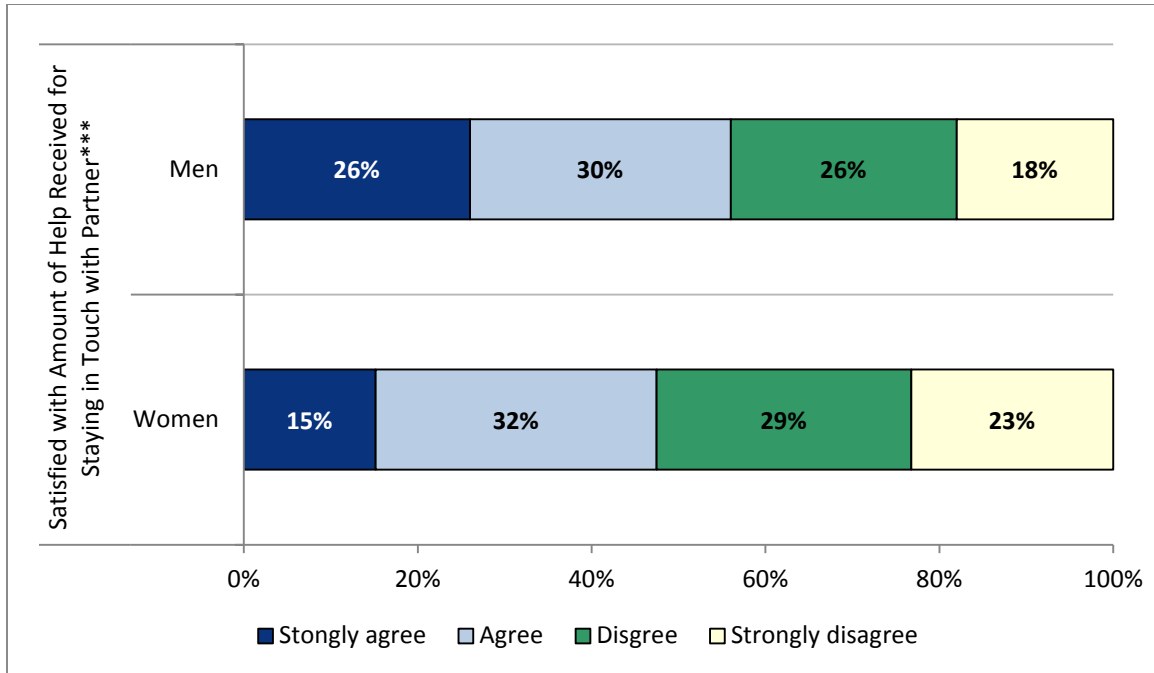
**Exhibit 3-10. Biggest Barriers to Contact with Partners during Incarceration**

	Men	Women
The prison is located too far away**	40%	44%
The cost of telephone calls is too high	37%	35%
The cost of visiting is too high*	28%	25%
The prison is not a pleasant place to visit***	28%	40%

Note: \* =  $p < 0.05$ , \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ , and \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$  for matched pair t-test of differences between male and female respondents in each couple.

**Exhibit 3-11** presents men's and women's responses to the statement, "You are satisfied with the amount of help you've received with staying in touch with your partner during this incarceration. This could be help from outside programs or agencies, program staff at your facility, clergy, correctional officers, or other staff." Within couples, women reported significantly less satisfaction than their male partners with the amount of help they received from community or correctional agencies with staying in touch with their partners during the incarceration ( $p < 0.001$ ).

**Exhibit 3-11. Satisfaction with Help Received for Staying in Touch with Partner\*\*\***

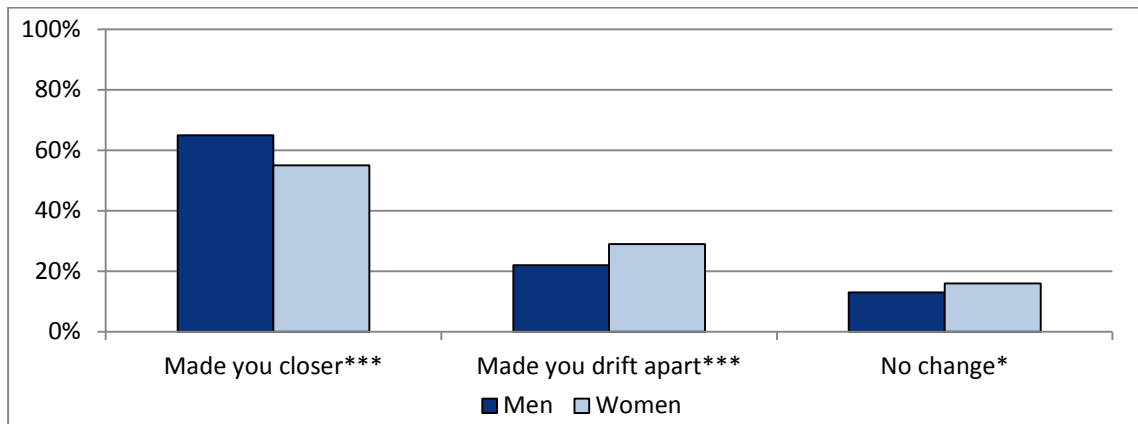


Note: \*= p < 0.05, \*\*= p < 0.01, and \*\*\*= p < 0.001 for matched pair t-test of differences between male and female respondents in each couple.

*Perceived Impact of Incarceration on Relationship*

Despite the challenges they experienced, over half of men and women believed that the male partner’s time in prison made them closer (**Exhibit 3-12**). Within couples, women were significantly less likely than their male partners to report increased closeness as a result of the incarceration (p < 0.001).

**Exhibit 3-12. Impact of Incarceration on Couple Relationship**



Note: \*= p < 0.05, \*\*= p < 0.01, and \*\*\*= p < 0.001 for matched pair t-test of differences between male and female respondents in each couple.

## **Policy Context Highlights**

**Couples reported being in serious, long-term relationships.** Over half of the couples lived together, and the same proportion shared an income before the incarceration. The majority of couples reported that they often enjoyed being together as a family before the incarceration, and about half said they often did family-oriented activities together.

**Couples' contact during the incarceration varied widely.** More than half of men spoke to their partners at least once a week, but 16 percent never spoke to their partners. Slightly more than half of men received visits from their partners at least twice a month, whereas 21 percent never received visits from their partners. Letter writing was the most common form of contact, with 68 percent of men reporting that they wrote their partners every week and 55 percent reporting that they received mail from their partners every week.

**Incarcerated men and their partners face multiple barriers to communication.** Both partners reported distance, costs, and the atmosphere of the prison environment as being barriers to contact. Additionally, women reported dissatisfaction with the amount of help they received from community and correctional agencies with staying in touch with their partners during incarceration.

**Intimate partner violence is a significant problem among this population.** Rates of physical and emotional abuse perpetration and victimization within the study couples during the six months prior to the male partner's incarceration were notably high, with 45 percent of men and 40 percent of women reporting physical victimization, and 34 percent and 36 percent reporting emotional victimization, respectively. While there was high agreement ("congruence") among partners regarding prevalence of abuse within their relationship, overall, female partners felt safe less often than their male counterparts ( $p < 0.001$ ).



# Chapter 4. Parenting and Coparenting

In this chapter, we describe parenting and coparenting experiences among incarcerated men and their partners before and during the male partner’s incarceration. Men and women who reported parenting one or more minor children were asked some questions about all of their children and an additional set of questions about their experiences parenting a focal child (criteria for focal child selection are described in **Chapter 1**).

## Parenting Status and Characteristics

### *Parenthood and Number of Children*

As shown in **Exhibit 4-1**, 86 percent of men and 81 percent of women in the MFS-IP sample reported being parents of minor children. Within couples, men were more likely to have minor children and had more children than their partners. Men’s children were also older, on average, than their female partners’ children.

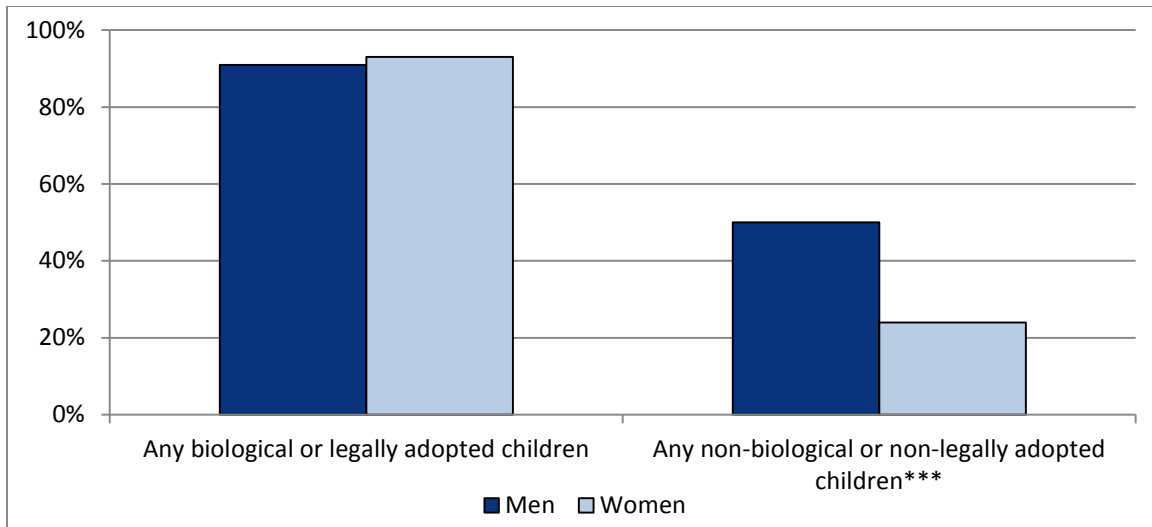
**Exhibit 4-1. Parenting Status and Child Characteristics**

	Men	Women
Parenting status		
Has children under 18***	86%	81%
Average number of children***	3.1	2.4
Characteristics of children parented		
Average age of children***	8.0 years	7.6 years

Note: \* =  $p < 0.05$ , \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ , and \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$  for matched pair t-test of differences between male and female respondents in each couple.

Among those who had children, the percentages of men and women who reported having biological or legally adopted children, as well as other children that they parented in some way, are shown in **Exhibit 4-2**. Within couples, men were more likely than their female partners to report parenting any nonbiological children who were not legally adopted.

**Exhibit 4-2. Formal or Informal Parent Status**



Note: \*= p < 0.05, \*\*= p < 0.01, and \*\*\*= p < 0.001 for matched pair t-test of differences between male and female respondents in each couple.

### Coparenting Status

As shown in **Exhibit 4-3**, most study participants (88 percent of men and 89 percent of women) reported coparenting a child or children with their study partners. They reported coparenting an average of two children. Men reported having children with an average of three different women, and women had children with an average of two different men. Within couples, men had more coparenting partners than their female partners.

**Exhibit 4-3. Coparenting Status**

	Men	Women
Average number of coparenting partners***	2.8	1.9
Coparenting any children with study partner***	88%	89%
Average number of children coparented***	2.0	2.0

Note: \*= p < 0.05, \*\*= p < 0.01, and \*\*\*= p < 0.001 for matched pair t-test of differences between male and female respondents in each couple.

## Parenting before Incarceration

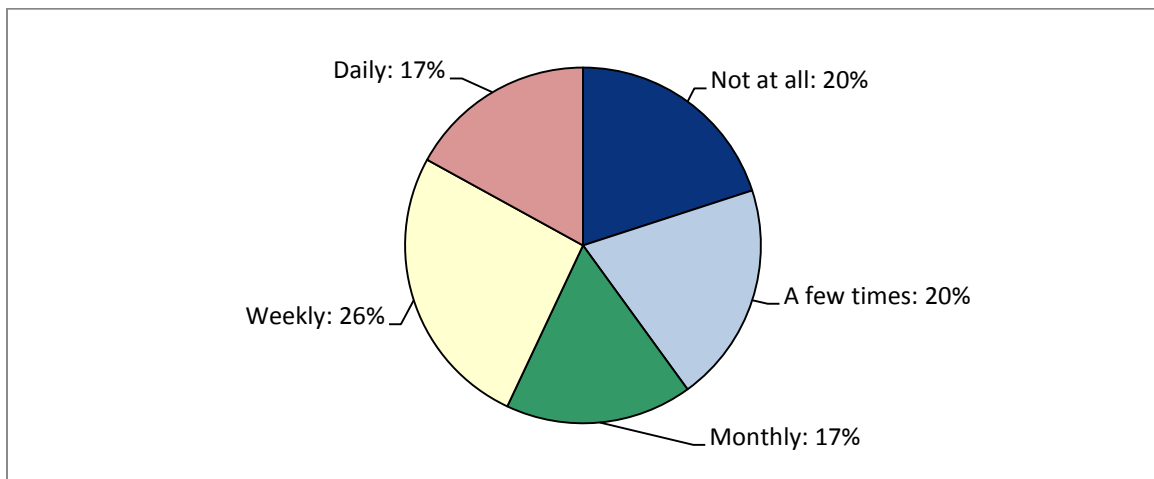
### Parent-Child Contact before Incarceration

Residential and nonresidential fathering were both common before the incarceration. During that time, 68 percent of fathers lived with any of their children, and 62 percent of fathers had children who did not live with them. Men reported cohabiting with an

average of 1.5 of their children and having an average of 1.4 children who did not live with them.

Among fathers with at least one nonresidential child, many (63%) had weekly or daily contact with at least one of those children, although a substantial minority (35%) had at least one nonresidential child whom they never saw. When examining men’s *average* frequency of contact with all of their nonresident children prior to incarceration (**Exhibit 4-4**), one-fifth never saw their nonresidential children, 37 percent had infrequent contact (monthly or a few times), and 43 percent had very regular contact (daily or weekly).

**Exhibit 4-4. Men’s Contact with Their Nonresident Children before Incarceration**



### *Financial Support for Children*

Almost all fathers (91%) provided some form of financial support for at least one child prior to their incarceration. On average, fathers provided financial support for 2.4 children, with 33 percent reporting at least one child they did not financially support.

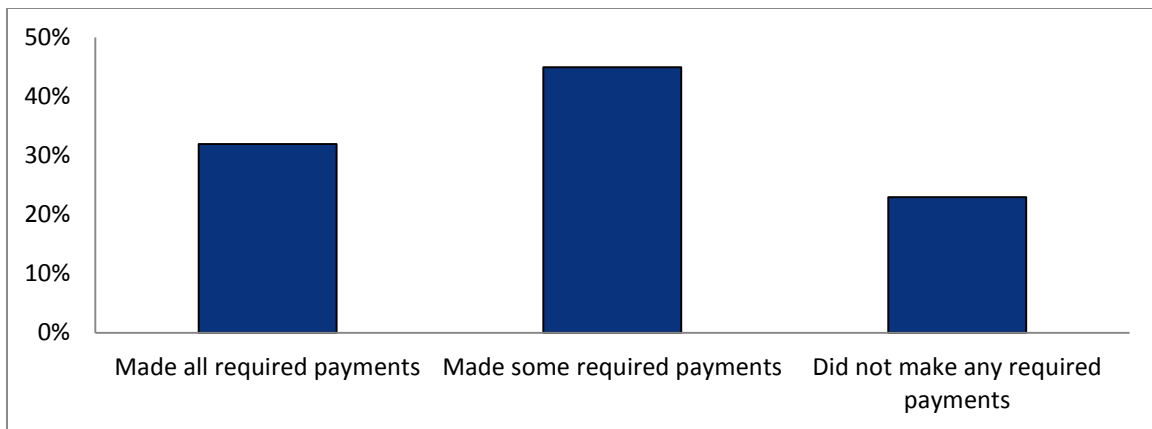
Formal engagement in the child support system was much less common than provision of informal support (**Exhibit 4-5**). One-third of fathers (35%) stated that they were required to pay child support for at least one of their children. Of those, most (89%) owed back child support.

**Exhibit 4-5. Men's Self-Reported Child Support System Involvement**

Child support orders	
Have any formal child support order	35%
Average number of children for whom child support orders exist	1.7
Order status during incarceration	
Owe back child support	89%
Order modified during incarceration	38%

Compliance with formal child support orders during the six months prior to incarceration varied, with 32 percent of men reporting that they made all required child support payments during this period (**Exhibit 4-6**).

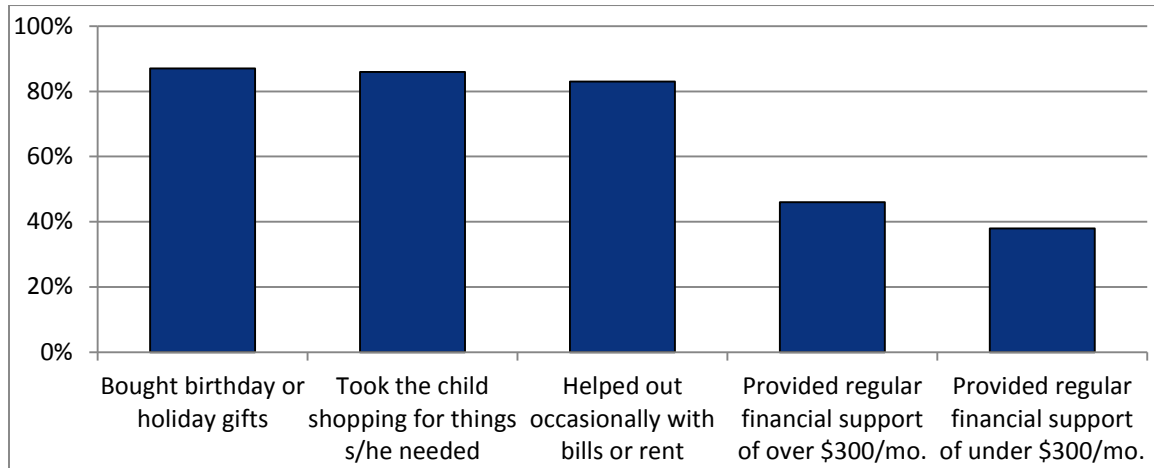
**Exhibit 4-6. Men's Payment of Required Child Support before Incarceration**



*Support for Focal Child*

Seventy-one percent of women reported that the male partner provided some form of material support for the focal child during the six months prior to the incarceration. (Fifty-nine percent of fathers were living with the focal child during this period.) Among male partners who provided support for the focal child, this included taking the child shopping (87%), helping out occasionally with household expenses (83%), and providing some amount of steady, regular financial support (84%) (**Exhibit 4-7**).

Nationally representative data for incarcerated fathers show that 54 percent reported being the primary financial provider for their children prior to their incarceration (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008).

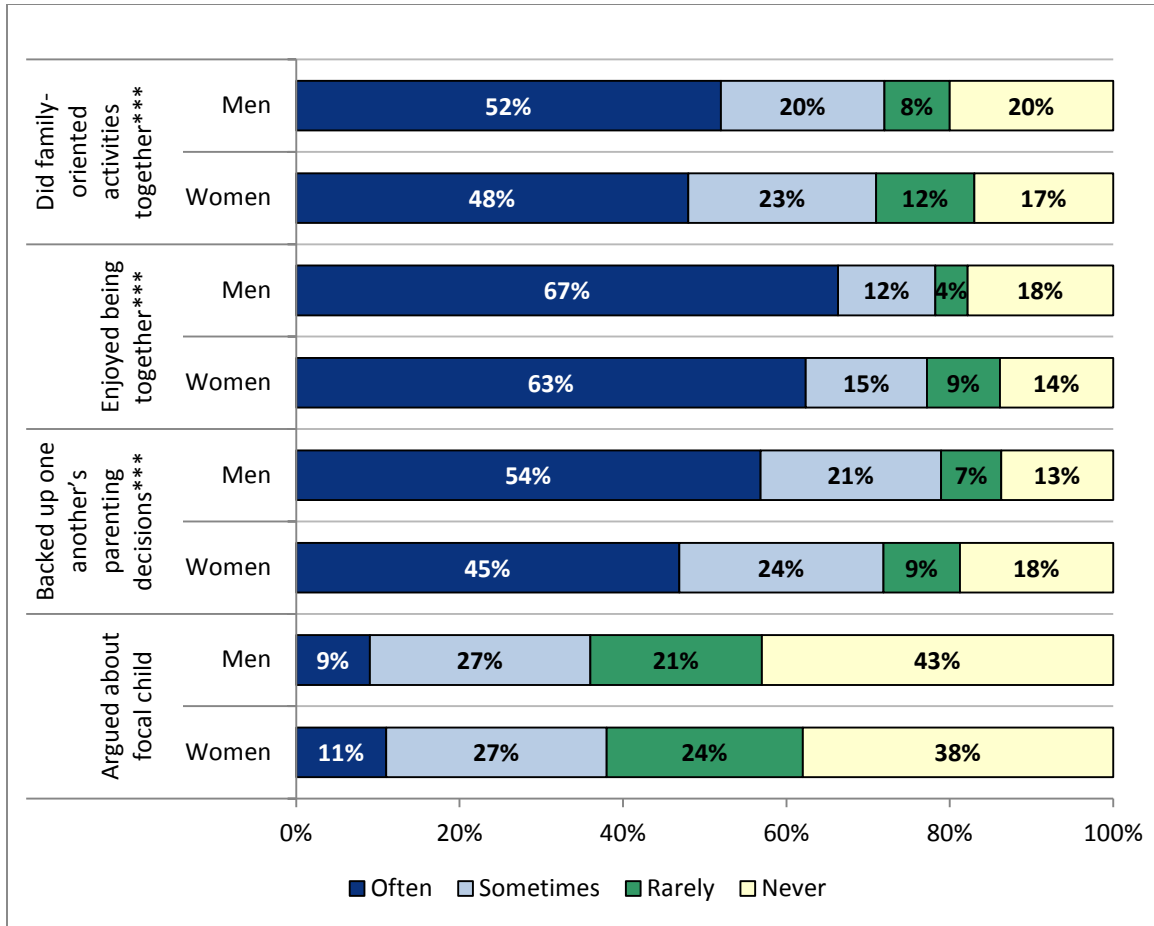
**Exhibit 4-7. Women’s Reports of Ways Men Supported Focal Child before Incarceration**

### *Family Life and Coparenting*

Men’s and women’s perceptions of the quality and frequency of their family time and coparenting experiences prior to the incarceration are shown in **Exhibit 4-8**. About half of respondents reported that they often did family-oriented activities together with their child(ren) and study partners during that period, and the majority reported that they often enjoyed being together as a family. Within couples, men reported that they often enjoyed being together more frequently and did family-oriented activities together more regularly than their female partners reported ( $p < 0.001$  for both items).

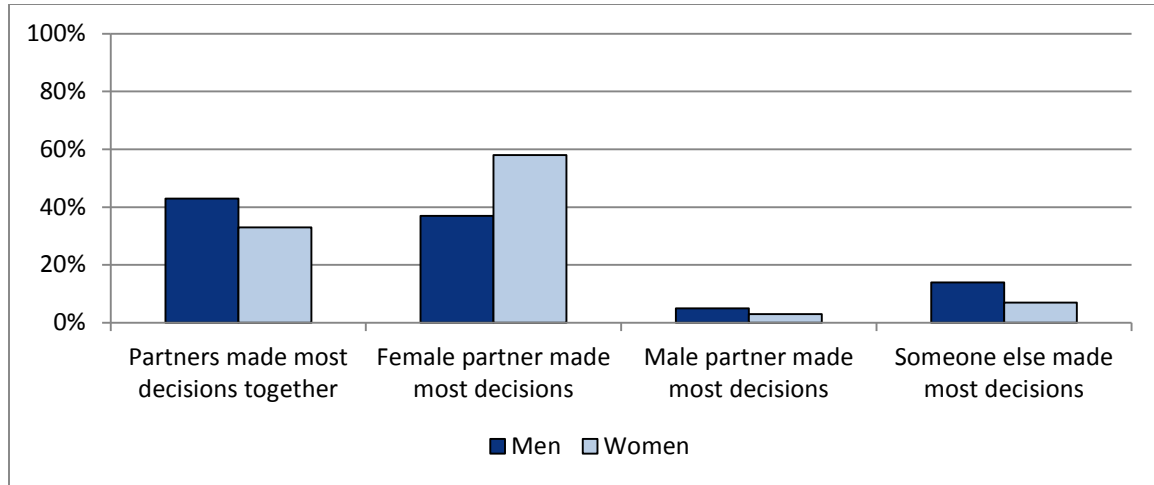
With regard to the frequency of parenting-related arguments, only nine percent of men and 11 percent of women reported that they often argued about the focal child prior to the incarceration, whereas 43 percent of men and 38 percent of women reported that they never argued about the child. There were no statistically significant differences within couples in the frequency of reported arguments about the focal child. About half of men and women reported that the couple often backed up one another’s parenting decisions, even if one of them did not like the decision. Within couples, men reported more frequent backing up of decisions than their partners ( $p < 0.001$ ).

**Exhibit 4-8. Family Life and Coparenting before Incarceration**



Note: \*= p < 0.05, \*\*= p < 0.01, and \*\*\*= p < 0.001 for matched pair t-test of differences between male and female respondents in each couple.

For decision making about the focal children, there was also variability in men's and women's reports (**Exhibit 4-9**). Within couples, women were significantly less likely than their male partners to report that the couple made most decisions about the focal child jointly (p < 0.001).

**Exhibit 4-9. Decision Making about Focal Children before Incarceration**

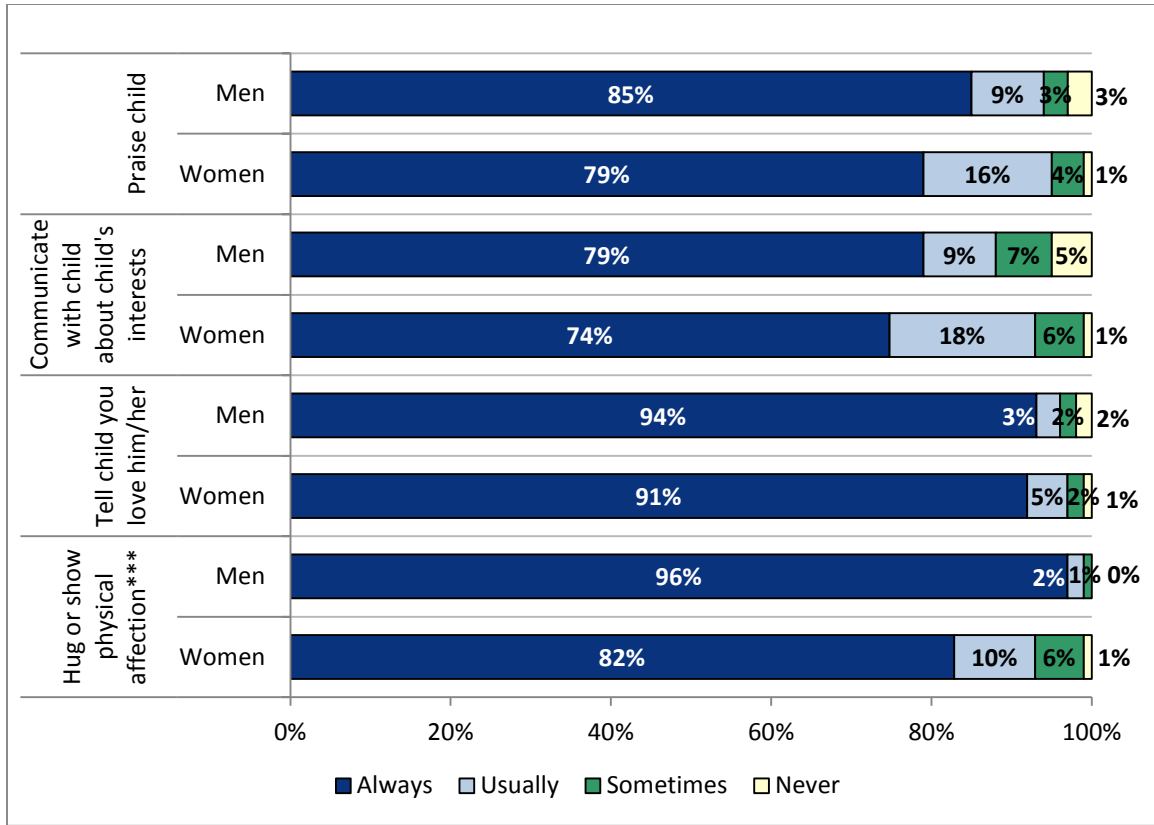
## Quality of Current Parent-Child and Coparenting Relationships

### *Parental Warmth*

Men and women reported high levels of parental warmth with the focal children.

**Exhibit 4-10** shows the frequency with which men and women reported engaging in a given behavior with the child. Within couples, men reported hugging or showing physical affection with the child significantly more frequently than their female partners.

**Exhibit 4-10. Current Parental Warmth**



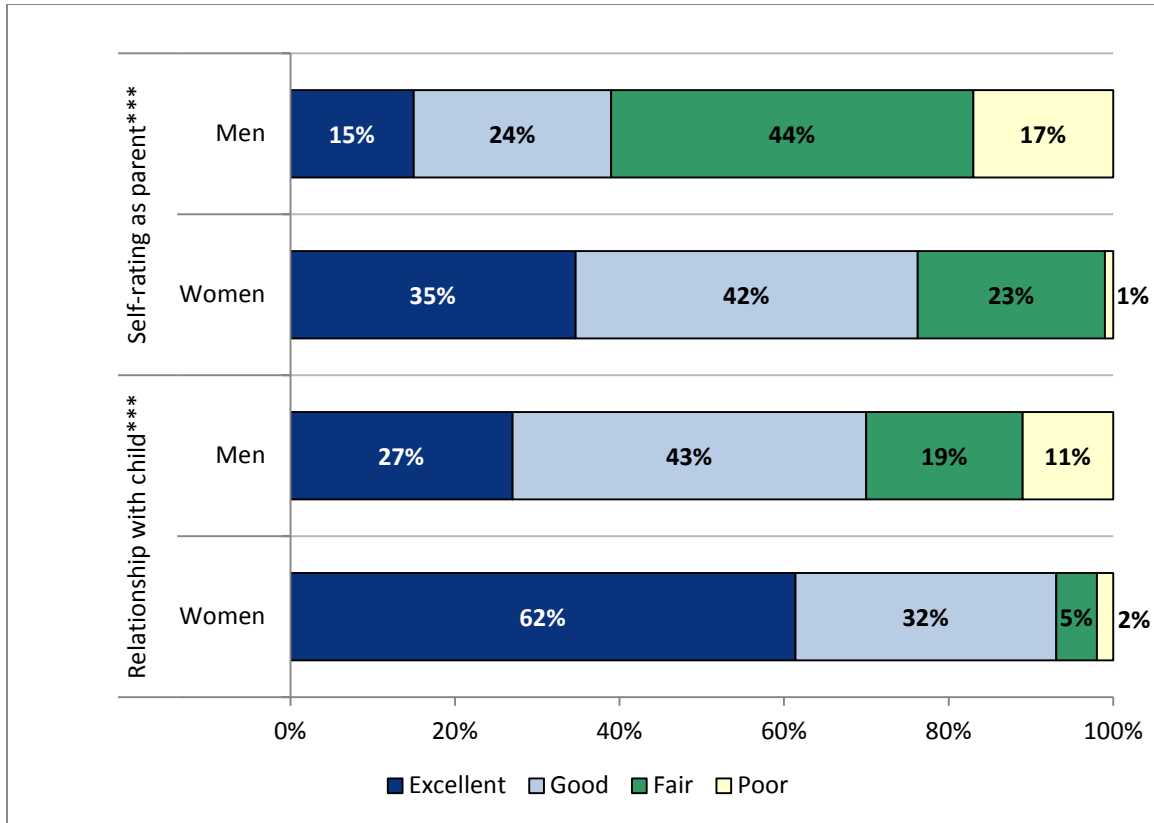
Note: \* =  $p < 0.05$ , \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ , and \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$  for matched pair t-test of differences between male and female respondents in each couple.

### Self-Assessment of Parenting Quality

Men's and women's self-ratings of the quality of their current relationships with the focal children and their assessments of themselves as parents are shown in **Exhibit 4-11**. Within couples, men had lower ratings than their female partners for both measures ( $p < 0.001$  for both differences).



**Exhibit 4-11. Ratings of Current Relationship with Focal Child and Self as a Parent**

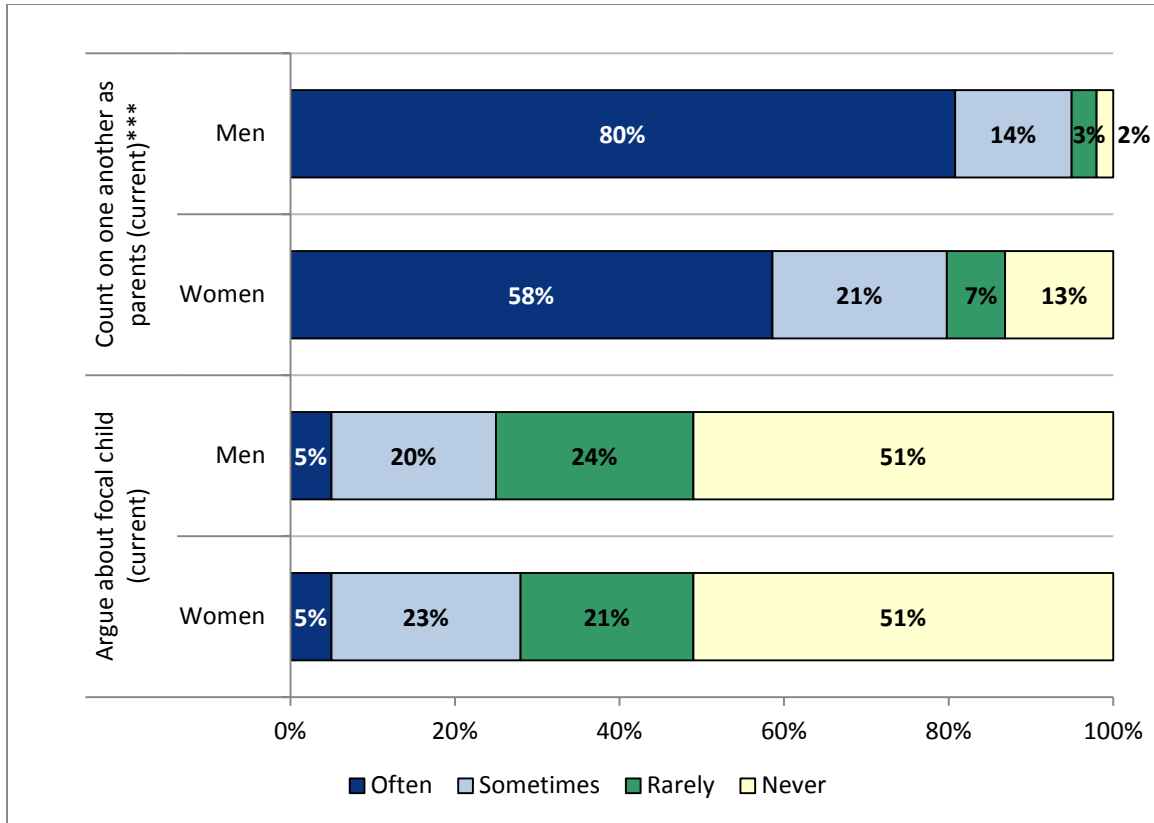


Note: \*= p < 0.05, \*\*= p < 0.01, and \*\*\*= p < 0.001 for matched pair t-test of differences between male and female respondents in each couple.

### *Coparenting Experiences during Incarceration*

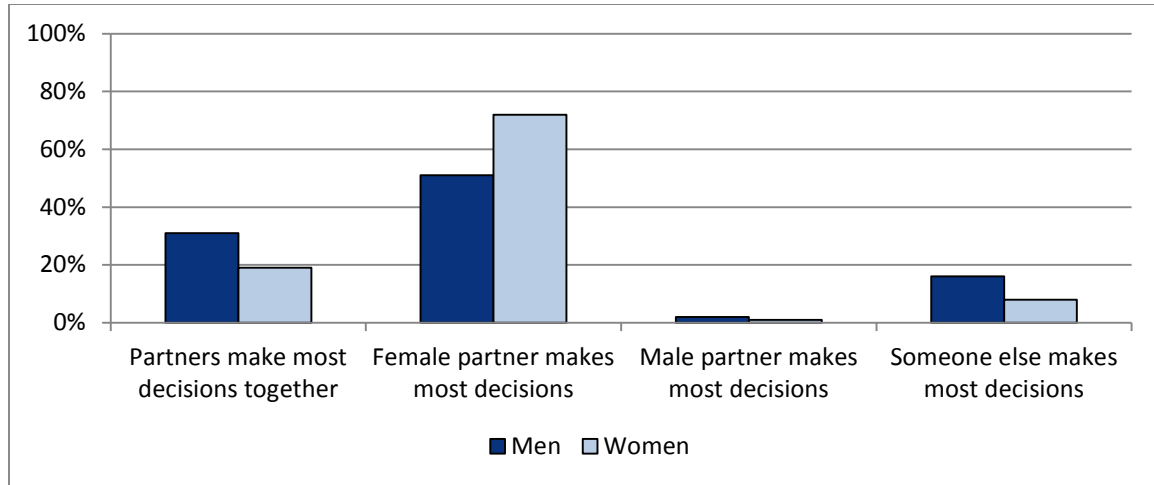
As shown in **Exhibit 4-12**, high proportions of both men and women reported that they could often count on one another as parents during the incarceration. However, within couples, a higher proportion of men than of women felt that they could count on their partners as parents ( $p < 0.001$ ). Respondents reported fewer parenting-related arguments during the incarceration than during the six months before the incarceration; just five percent of men and women reported that they often argued about the focal child (compared with nine percent of men and 11 percent of women prior to incarceration).

**Exhibit 4-12** Current Coparenting Experiences



Note: \* =  $p < 0.05$ , \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ , and \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$  for matched pair t-test of differences between male and female respondents in each couple.

**Exhibit 4-13** shows men's and women's perceptions about how decisions are currently made about the focal children. Just as they had for the period prior to the incarceration, men were significantly more likely than their female partners to report that the couple made most parenting decisions together ( $p < 0.001$ ).

**Exhibit 4-13. Current Decision Making about Focal Children**

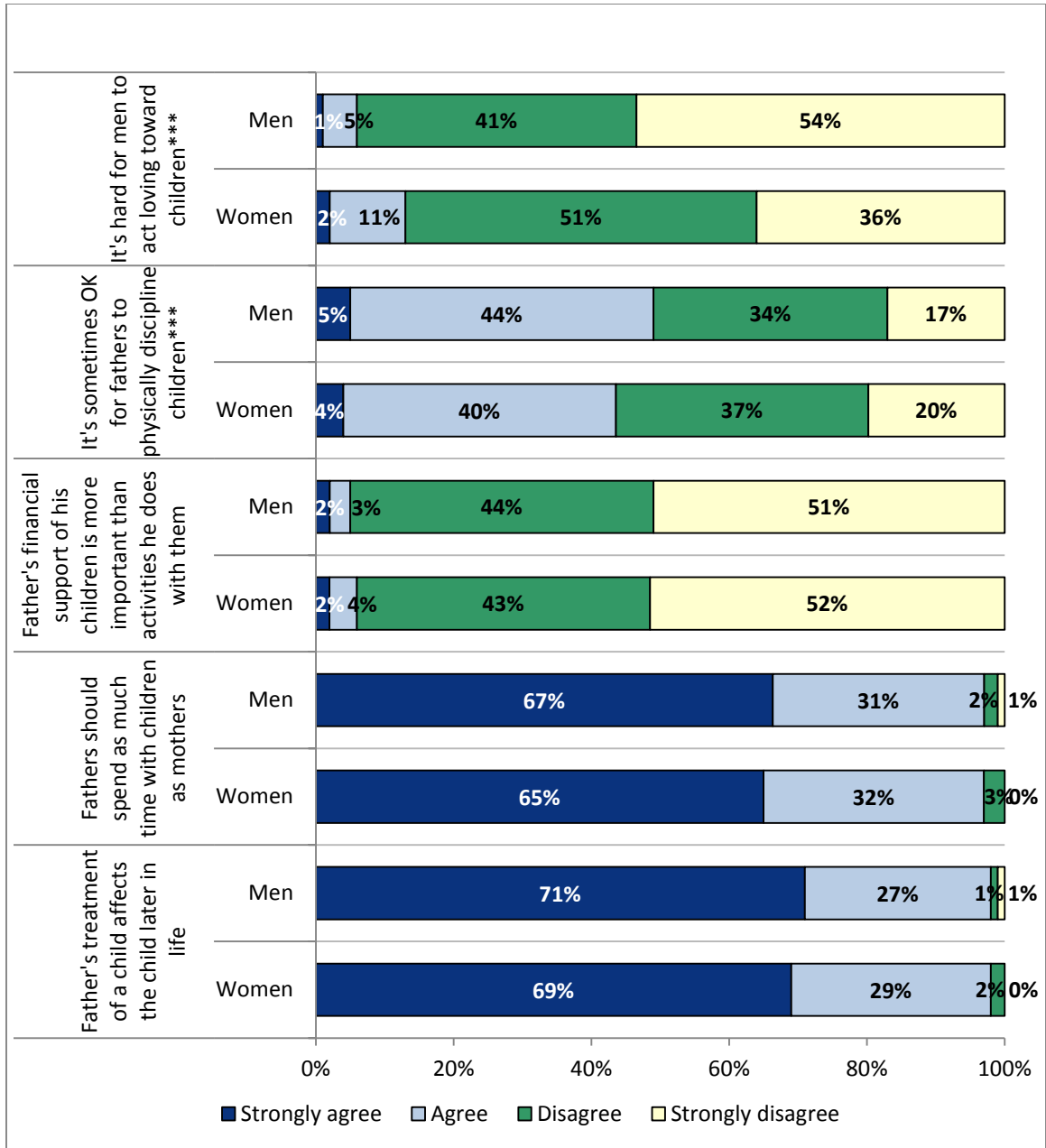
Thirty-one percent of men and 19 percent of women reported making most parenting decisions together during the incarceration, whereas 43 percent of men and 33 percent of women reported mostly joint decision making prior to the incarceration (see **Exhibit 4-9**).

#### *Attitudes toward Fatherhood*

Both men and women expressed positive attitudes toward fatherhood. **Exhibit 4-14** shows respondents' agreement with each of the statements below about fatherhood. As shown in the exhibit, within couples, men were significantly more likely than women to agree that it is acceptable to physically discipline children and to disagree that it is hard for men to act loving toward children ( $<0.001$ ).

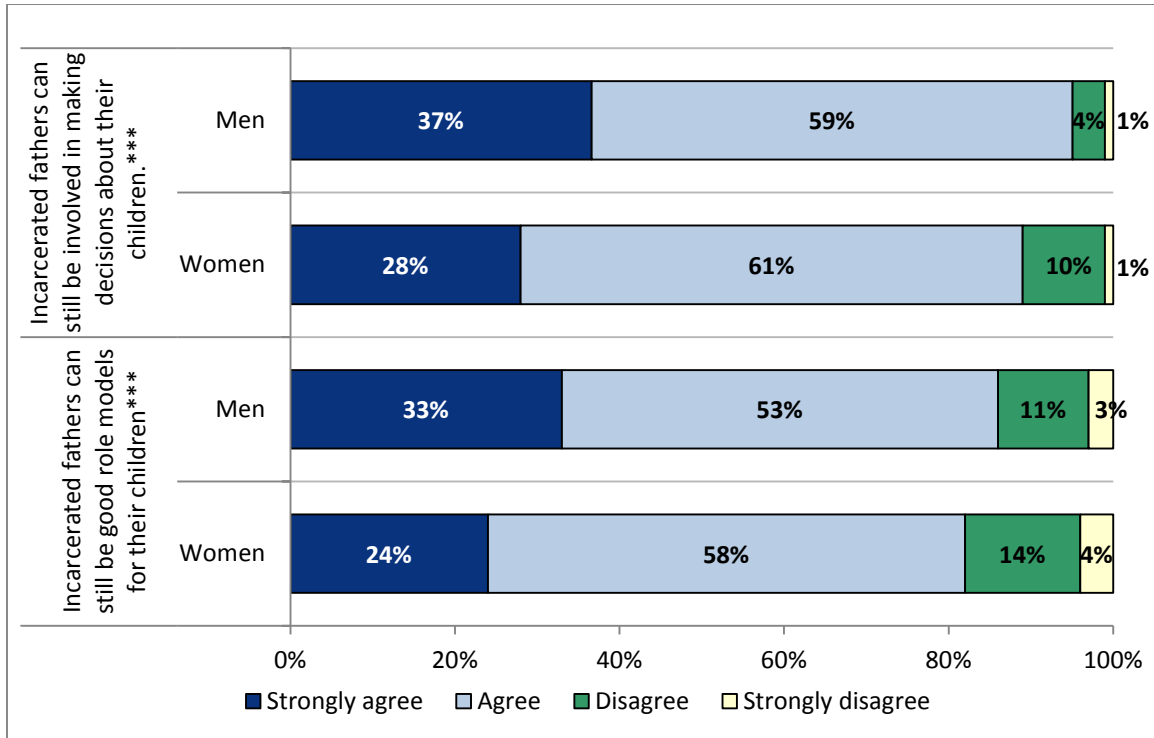
**Exhibit 4-15** shows the extent to which men and women agreed with statements about fathering while incarcerated. Within couples, men felt more strongly than their partners that incarcerated fathers could be good role models and could still be involved in making decisions about their children ( $p < 0.001$  for both differences).

Exhibit 4-14. Attitudes toward Fatherhood



Note: \* = p < 0.05, \*\* = p < 0.01, and \*\*\* = p < 0.001 for matched pair t-test of differences between male and female respondents in each couple.

**Exhibit 4-15. Attitudes toward Incarcerated Fatherhood**



Note: \* =  $p < 0.05$ , \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ , and \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$  for matched pair t-test of differences between male and female respondents in each couple.

## Parenting Experiences during Incarceration

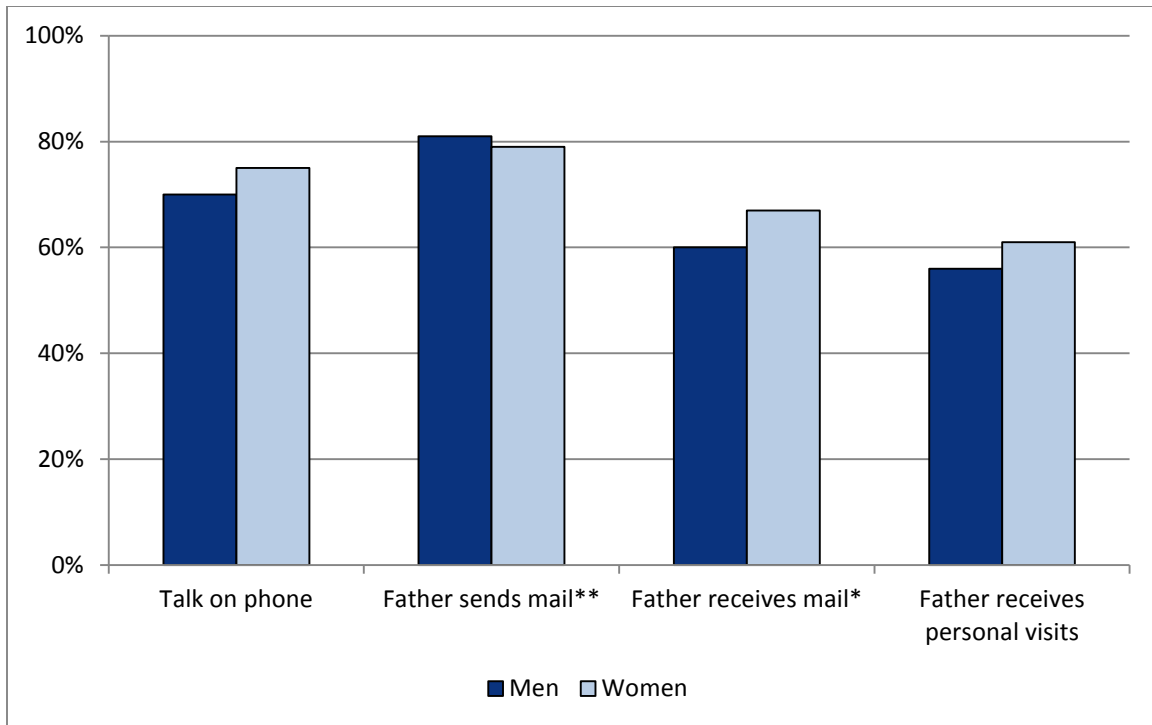
### *Parent-Child Contact during Incarceration*

Respondents generally affirmed the importance of father-child contact during incarceration: 91 percent of men and 67 percent of women strongly agreed that it was very important for the male partner and his children to stay in touch during the incarceration. Within couples, the male partner felt more strongly than the female partner about the importance of his staying in touch with his children ( $p < 0.001$ ).

Seventy percent of fathers saw at least one of their children in person at least once a month, and 55 percent spoke on the telephone with at least one of their children every week. Men’s and women’s reports of the types of contact that occurred between the father and his focal child are shown in **Exhibit 4-16**. The exhibit shows the proportion of respondents who reported that each type of contact had ever occurred during the incarceration. Site variation is discussed in **Appendix B**.

Nationally, 70 percent of parents in state prison report exchanging letters with any of their children during their current incarceration. Fifty-three percent spoke with their children over the telephone, and 42 percent had in-person contact (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008).

**Exhibit 4-16. Forms of Contact with Focal Children during Incarceration**



Note: \*= p < 0.05, \*\*= p < 0.01, and \*\*\*= p < 0.001 for matched pair t-test of differences between male and female respondents in each couple.

Frequency of telephone, mail, and in-person contact between fathers and their focal children is shown in **Exhibit 4-17** (based on female reports).<sup>23</sup> Although contact occurred fairly frequently in many families, a sizable minority of focal children never received mail (21%), spoke on the phone (26%), or had in-person contact (39%) with their fathers.

**Exhibit 4-17. Women's Reports of Frequency of Fathers' Contact with Focal Children during Incarceration**

	Weekly or More	Biweekly	Monthly	Every Two Months	Only a Couple of Times	Never
Father sends mail to child	17%	28%	16%	10%	9%	21%
Father and child talk on phone	36%	19%	9%	5%	6%	26%
Father receives personal visits from child	8%	20%	12%	11%	12%	39%

<sup>23</sup> Men were asked about types of contact they had with the focal child, types of contact with their other children, and frequency of each type of contact with any of their children. Women were asked only about the type and frequency of contact their partners had with the focal child (because it was not presumed that they would be able to speak reliably about contact with their partner's other children). Women's reports of frequency of contact are presented here instead of men's because they focused on the focal child.

Many of the same issues that made partner contact difficult were also cited as barriers to father-child contact. **Exhibit 4-18** shows the issues that the highest numbers of men strongly agreed were barriers to father-child contact during the incarceration. (Respondents could select multiple barriers.)

**Exhibit 4-18. Men’s Reports of Barriers to Father-Child Contact during Incarceration**

	% Who Strongly Agree	% Who Agree	% Who Disagree	% Who Strongly Disagree
The prison is located too far away	40%	20%	27%	12%
The prison is not a pleasant place to visit	35%	39%	22%	5%
The cost of calling or receiving calls is too high	31%	32%	30%	7%
The cost of visiting is too high	26%	30%	34%	11%
Hard for partner to find time to bring the child to visit	24%	34%	32%	10%

Whereas men were asked about barriers to contact with (all of) their children, women were asked specifically about barriers to contact between the father and focal child. Women perceived similar barriers to contact with the focal children as the fathers reported for their children in general: the prison location (which 39 percent of women strongly agreed was a barrier), the unpleasantness of the prison setting (44%), and the cost of telephone calls (30%).

Men were generally unsatisfied with the amount of help they had received to stay in touch with their children during the incarceration; just 18 percent of men strongly agreed and 24 percent agreed that they were satisfied with help they received to maintain contact with their children, while almost 60 percent disagreed (29%) or strongly disagreed (30%) with this statement. In contrast, when asked about satisfaction with help they received to maintain contact with their partners (see **Chapter 3**), 56 percent of men agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied.

### *Concerns about Children during Incarceration*

Respondents, particularly men, had many concerns about the focal children’s well-being during the incarceration. **Exhibit 4-19** shows men’s and women’s most common concerns about the focal children during the men’s incarcerations. The top four “biggest concerns” were the same for the male and female subsamples: the focal child’s happiness, the lack of a male role model for the child, the possibility that the child and father would not be as close as they were before the incarceration, and there being enough money to support the child. However, within couples, men were more likely than their female partners to express every concern listed in **Exhibit 4-19**.

**Exhibit 4-19. Most Common Concerns about Focal Children during Incarceration**

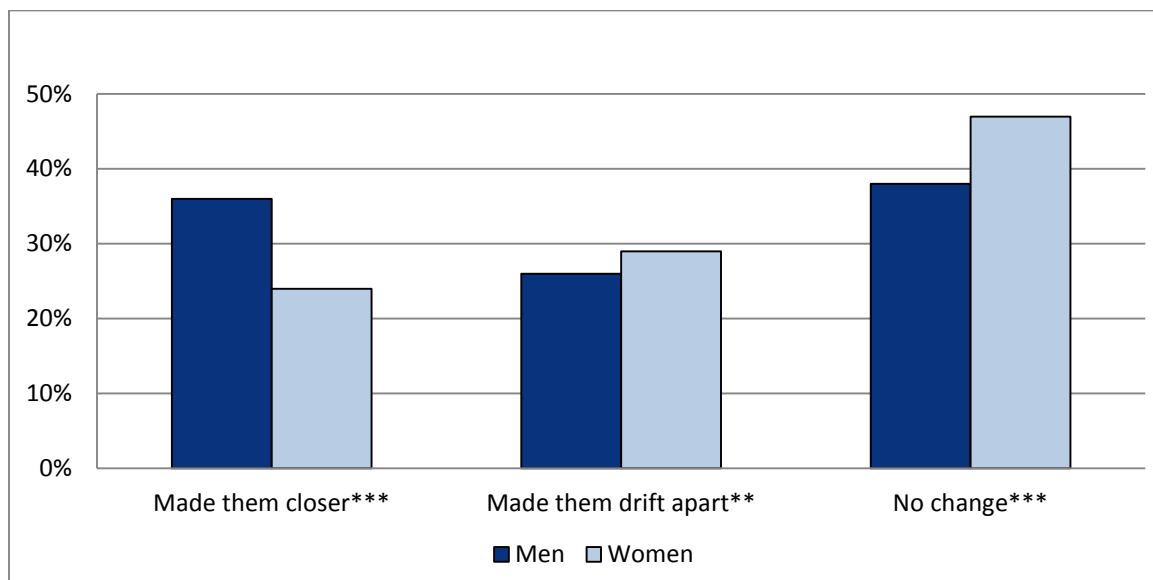
	Men	Women
Child's happiness***	79%	64%
Child won't have a male role model***	66%	56%
Father won't be as close to child as before***	53%	41%
There being enough money to support child***	64%	51%
How child is doing in school***	68%	39%
Child will get in trouble***	53%	32%
Child will be teased or threatened by peers***	39%	21%

Note: \* =  $p < 0.05$ , \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ , and \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$  for matched pair t-test of differences between male and female respondents in each couple.

*Perceived Impact of Incarceration on Parent-Child Relationship*

While over half of respondents reported positive changes in their romantic relationships during the incarceration (see **Chapter 3**), two out of three men and three out of four women believed that it had a negative or neutral effect on the father-child relationship (**Exhibit 4-20**). Within couples, women were significantly less likely than their male partners to perceive increased father-child closeness as a result of the incarceration ( $p < 0.001$ ).

**Exhibit 4-20. Impact of Incarceration on Father-Child Relationship**



Note: \* =  $p < 0.05$ , \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ , and \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$  for matched pair t-test of differences between male and female respondents in each couple.



## Policy Context Highlights

**Family structures were complicated, and most men had children in multiple households.** The typical man had fathered children with three different women, and women typically coparented with two different men. Slightly more than two-thirds of fathers (68%) had lived with at least one of their children before the incarceration, and almost as many (62%) also had children who did not live with them.

**Most fathers made meaningful parenting contributions before the incarceration.** Almost all fathers (91%) reported that they provided some form of material support for at least one child prior to their incarceration, with an average of 2.4 supported children per father. Among fathers with at least one nonresidential child, 63 percent were in daily or weekly contact with at least one of those children.

**Fathers' contact with their children during the incarceration varied widely.** Seventy percent of fathers saw one or more of their children in person at least once a month, and 55 percent spoke on the telephone with one or more of their children every week. But a sizable minority (39%) had never had in-person contact with the focal child during the current incarceration, and a quarter had never spoken on the phone.

**Parents shared many fears and concerns about their children.** Men and women were both concerned about the focal child's well-being during the incarceration: specifically, the child's happiness, the lack of a male role model, the lack of money to support the child, and the possibility that father and child would not be as close as they were before his incarceration.

# Chapter 5. Extended Family Relationships

This chapter describes couples' relationships with their extended families, including

- childhood family experiences,
- extended family criminal involvement and substance use history,
- men's extended family and peer relationships before incarceration, and
- extended family relationships during incarceration.

## Childhood Family Experiences

### *Childhood Parenting Situations*

**Exhibit 5-1** shows key characteristics of respondents' childhood parenting situations among the 1,482 couples. Over half the sample lived with two people they considered to be parents while they were growing up. Nearly all men and women lived with their biological mothers at some point, but far fewer reported having lived with their biological fathers. Within couples, men were less likely than their female partners to have lived with both parents, less likely to have lived with their biological fathers, and more likely to report having had nonbiological father and mother figures during their childhoods.

**Exhibit 5-1. Childhood Parenting Situations**

	Men	Women
Grew up in two-parent home*	58%	62%
Ever lived with biological father**	59%	64%
Had other father figure***	48%	40%
Ever lived with biological mother	96%	96%
Had other mother figure***	48%	42%
Changes in parenting situation during childhood (mean number of times situation changed)	1.8 times	1.5 times
Perceived stability of childhood parenting situation***		
Very stable	33%	43%
Stable	44%	40%
Unstable	16%	11%
Very unstable	6%	6%

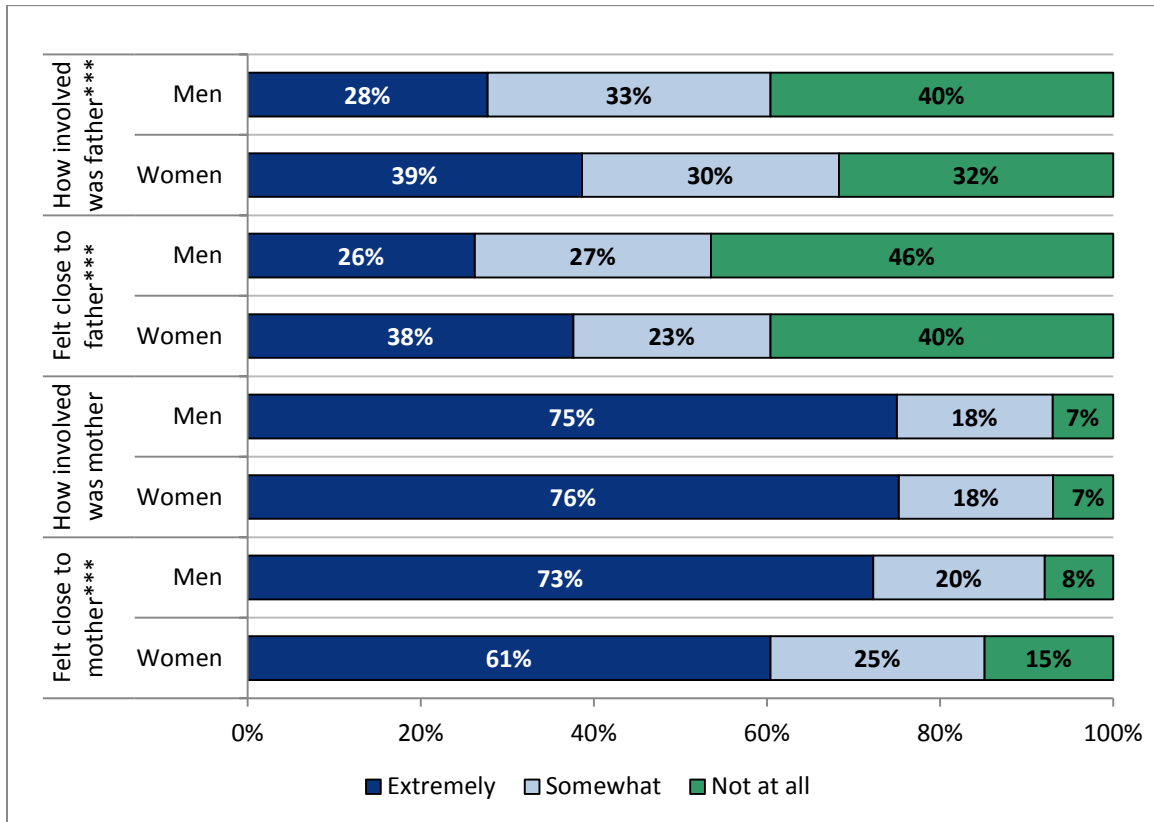
Note: \* =  $p < 0.05$ , \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ , and \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$  for matched pair t-test of differences between male and female respondents in each couple.

Most respondents considered the parenting arrangements during their childhoods to be stable or very stable, and the female member of the couple perceived her childhood parenting situation as more stable than the male member perceived his childhood parenting situation. On average, men and women experienced fewer than two changes in their parenting situations while they were growing up.

*Relationships with Biological Parents*

Respondents’ ratings of how close they felt to their biological parents during their childhoods, as well as how involved their parents were in their lives, are shown in **Exhibit 5-2**. All respondents were asked to report on their biological parents, even if they did not live with them during childhood.

**Exhibit 5-2. Closeness to and Involvement of Biological Parents during Childhood**



Note: \* = p < 0.05, \*\* = p < 0.01, and \*\*\* = p < 0.001 for matched pair t-test of differences between male and female respondents in each couple.

Biological mothers were reported to have been much more involved during childhood than biological fathers for both men and women. Interestingly, within couples, men were more likely than their partners to report feeling extremely close to their biological mothers during their childhoods. Women, however, were more likely than their partners to report feeling extremely close to their biological fathers and to perceive them as being very involved during their childhoods.

*Relationships with Other Parent Figures*

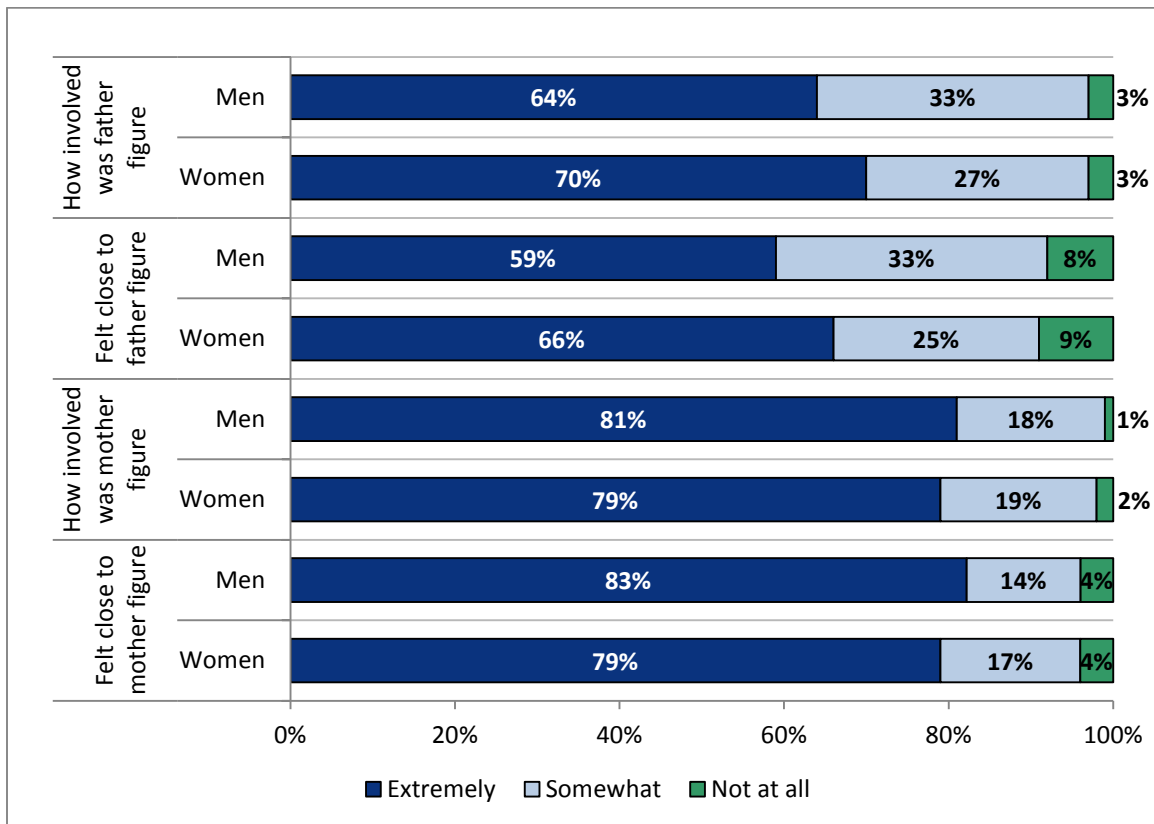
Respondents who reported having other parent figures in their childhoods were asked similar questions about these adults:

- 711 men and 595 women were asked about a father figure, including “someone else you considered to be your father, such as other adult men who helped to house or care for you on a regular basis before you turned 18.”
- 718 men and 616 women were asked about a mother figure, including “someone else you considered to be your mother, such as another adult woman who helped to house or care for you on a regular basis before you turned 18.”

The findings are shown in **Exhibit 5-3**.

Within couples, men and women did not differ significantly with respect to closeness and perceived involvement of nonbiological parents during their childhoods.

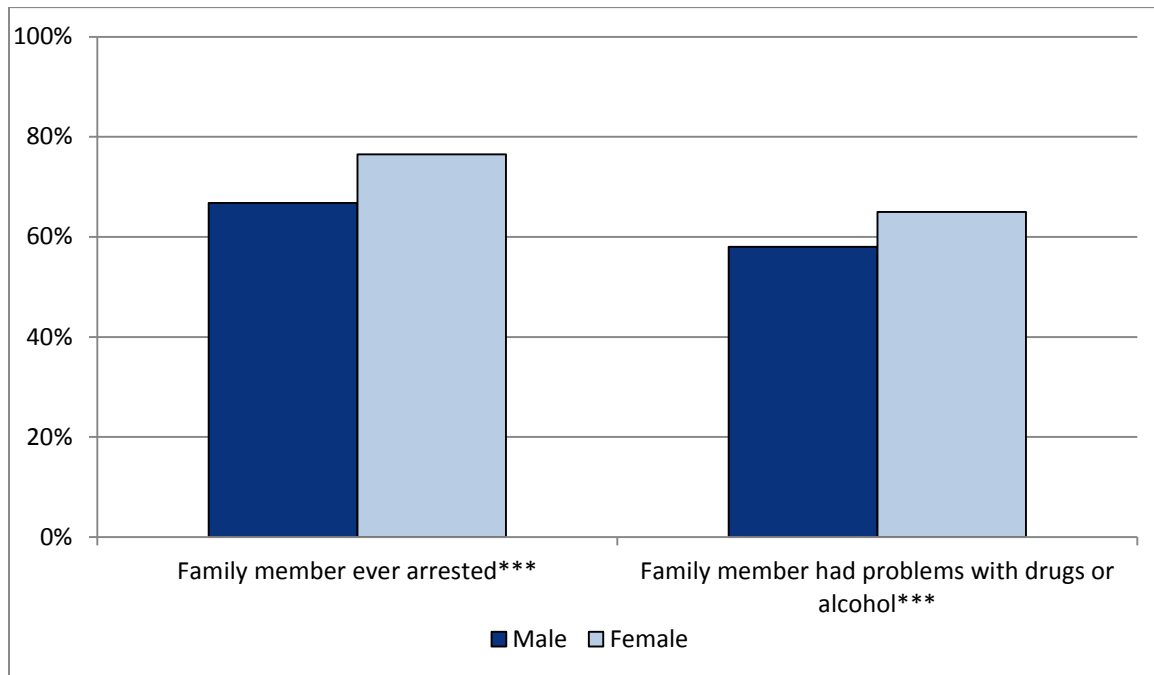
**Exhibit 5-3. Closeness to and Involvement of Other Parent Figures during Childhood**



## Family Criminal and Substance Use History

A large proportion of both men and women had extended family members with a history of arrest and problems with alcohol and other drugs. As shown in **Exhibit 5-4**, 67 percent of men and 77 percent of women reported that someone in their family (other than their survey partner) had been arrested. Within couples, the woman was more likely than the man to have a family member with a history of arrest. Most commonly, the family member with a history of arrest was the respondent's sibling, cousin, or father/stepfather.

**Exhibit 5-4. Family History of Arrest and Substance Use**



Note: \* =  $p < 0.05$ , \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ , and \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$  for matched pair t-test of differences between male and female respondents in each couple.

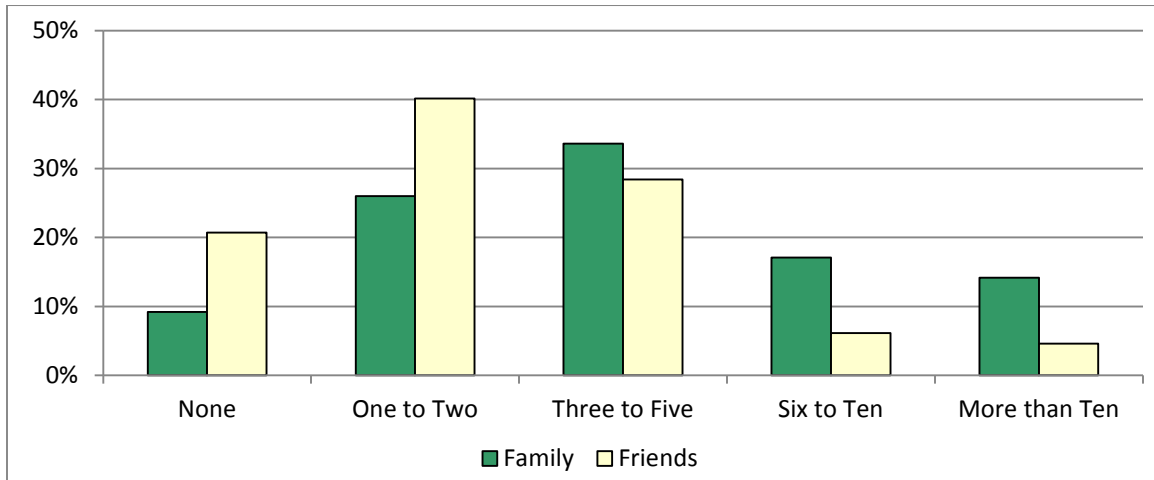
An extended family history of problems with drugs or alcohol was reported by 58 percent of men and 65 percent of women. Within couples, women were more likely than men to have extended family members with substance abuse problems. Drug and alcohol problems were prevalent among all types of family members, including fathers/stepfathers, mothers/stepmothers, siblings, aunts/uncles, and cousins.

Nationally, 49 percent of fathers in state prisons have a family history of incarceration. Thirty-three percent report that their parents or guardians abused drugs or alcohol at some point during their childhood (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008).

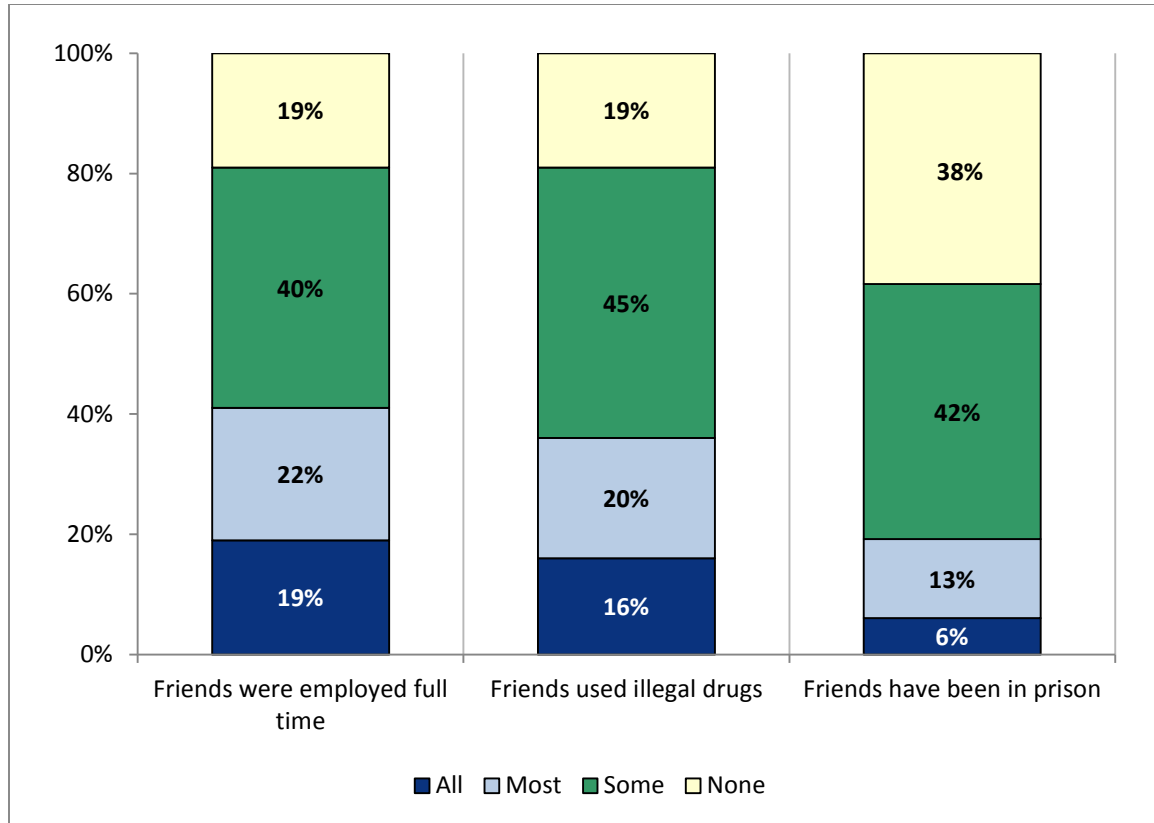
## Men's Family and Peer Relationships before Incarceration

The number of close family members and friends men reported having during the six months prior to the incarceration is shown in **Exhibit 5-5**. Men reported having more close family members than friends during this period, with 21 percent saying that they had no close friends. Typically, men had one to two close friends and three to five close family members during the six months prior to the incarceration.

**Exhibit 5-5. Men's Family and Friends before Incarceration**



Men's reports of the characteristics of friends they spent time with before the incarceration are shown in **Exhibit 5-6**. Fifty-nine percent of men reported that none or only some of their friends were employed full time, a smaller percentage (36%) reported that all or most were using illegal drugs, and just under a fifth reported that all or most of their friends had a history of incarceration.

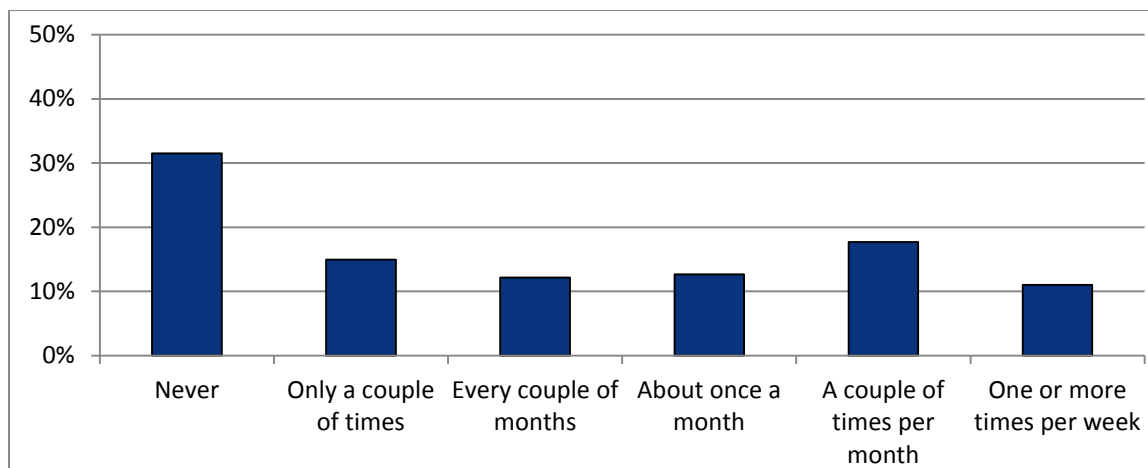
**Exhibit 5-6. Men’s Peer Influences before Incarceration**

The extent to which these peers had an influence on the men’s behavior varies. Although over half of the men (57%) said that the people they spent time with during the six months prior to incarceration never convinced them to do things they knew they should not be doing (with another 13 percent reporting that their friends rarely did this), 30 percent said that their friends sometimes (21%) or often (9%) had this effect on them. In contrast, more than two-thirds of female partners (67%) reported that the men’s friends sometimes or often convinced them to do things they knew they should not be doing. Within couples, women perceived that the male partner’s friends convinced him to do things he knew he should not be doing more frequently than the male partner did ( $p < 0.001$ ).

### Family Relationships during Incarceration

Men’s in-person contact with their extended families during the incarceration was fairly infrequent (**Exhibit 5-7**). (Contact with partners and children is covered in **Chapters 3** and **4**.) Nearly one-third (32%) reported that they had not received any visits from extended family members. Men who did report in-person visits were most likely to report receiving visits a couple of times per month.

**Exhibit 5-7. Men's Personal Visits from Extended Family during Incarceration**



**Exhibit 5-8** shows men's ratings of current emotional support from extended family members, other than their partners and children.<sup>24</sup> Just over a third of men strongly agreed that they feel close to their extended families and that they have someone in their family to talk to about themselves or their problems. Slightly under half strongly agreed that they have family members who would stand by them and that they have

**Exhibit 5-8. Men's Current Emotional Support from Extended Family**

	% Who Strongly Agree	% Who Agree	% Who Disagree	% Who Strongly Disagree
You feel close to your family	35%	42%	18%	5%
You have family members who will stand by you no matter what	45%	41%	10%	4%
You want your family to be involved in your life	52%	45%	3%	1%
You have someone in your family to talk to about yourself or your problems	37%	47%	13%	3%
You have someone in your family to love you and make you feel wanted	47%	43%	7%	3%
You are criticized a lot or put down by your family <sup>a</sup>	6%	20%	51%	24%
Mean family emotional support score (range: 0–18, higher values indicate higher family support)	13.3			

<sup>a</sup>Item was reverse coded in the family emotional support scale.

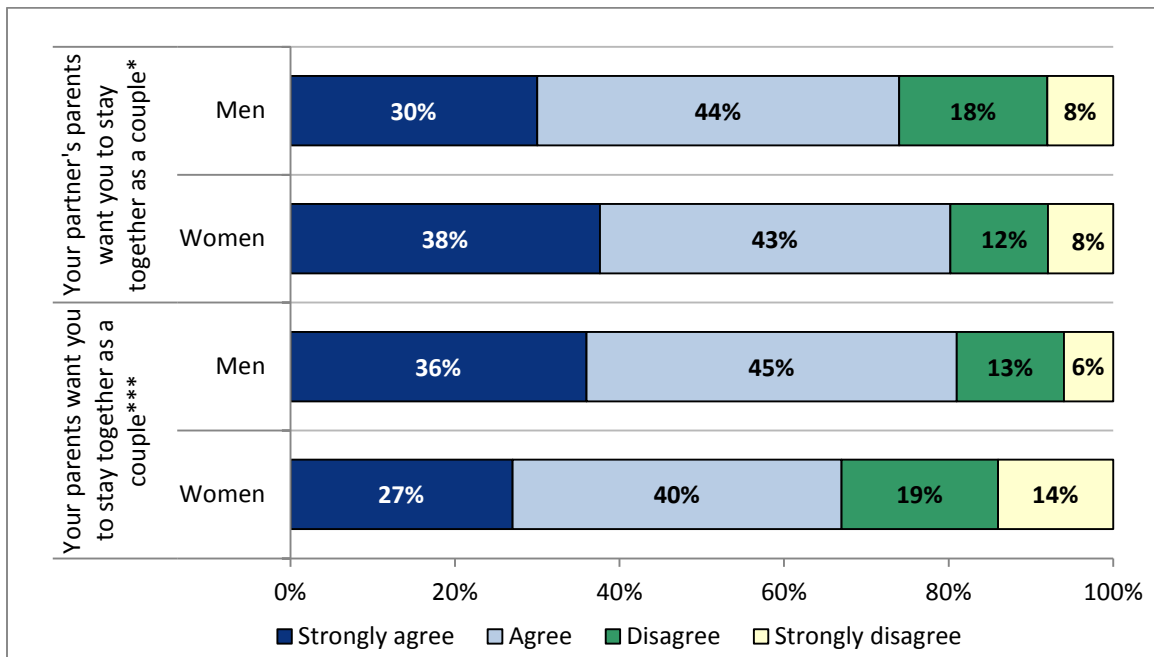
<sup>24</sup> As reported in **Chapter 2**, the "current" time period was an average of 3.4 years into the male partner's incarceration.



someone in their family to love them and make them feel wanted. (Women’s perceptions of their emotional support from extended family are discussed in **Chapter 6**.)

Finally, both male and female respondents reported on the extent to which their parents supported the couples’ relationships.<sup>25</sup> As shown in **Exhibit 5-9**, perceived parental support for the relationships was relatively high, with over two-thirds of men and women agreeing or strongly agreeing that their parents and their partner’s parents wanted the couple to stay together. Within couples, men were significantly more likely than their partners to perceive their *own* parents as wanting the couple to stay together and less likely than their partners to perceive that the *other partner’s* parents wanted the couple to stay together.

**Exhibit 5-9. Parental Support for Couples’ Relationships**



Note: \* =  $p < 0.05$ , \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ , and \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$  for matched pair t-test of differences between male and female respondents in each couple.

## Policy Context Highlights

**Drug and alcohol abuse is common among family and social networks of justice-involved men.** An extended family history of problems with drugs or alcohol was reported by over half (58%) of men (and 65% of women), and 37 percent reported that all or most of their friends were using illegal drugs.

<sup>25</sup> The term “parents” was not defined for respondents in the interview question. In addition, this question was asked of couples who were in an intimate relationship at the time of the baseline interview.

**Men's in-person contact with their extended families during incarceration was fairly infrequent.** Nearly a third (32%) reported that they had not received any visits from extended family members and another 15 percent had very few visits. However, men generally felt close to their families and perceived them as being loving and supportive.

**Men and their partners do not agree on how much the men's friends influence negative behaviors.** Less than a third of men felt that their friends influenced their behavior negatively, but more than two-thirds of women reported that friends were a negative influence on their partners before incarceration.

**High unemployment/underemployment was reported for the men's social networks.** While almost 75 percent of men reported that they were working full time prior to incarceration (**Chapter 2**), about 60 percent reported that none or only some of the friends they spent time with before incarceration were working full time.

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# Chapter 6. Women’s Experiences during Their Partners’ Incarcerations

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This chapter describes the experiences of women during their partners’ incarcerations, including

- employment status and sources of income,
- housing situation,
- mental and physical health,
- support from family and friends, and
- substance use.

The information is based on what the women reported during their baseline interviews, which, on average, took place 3.4 years into the men’s incarcerations.

## Employment and Income

Just over half of women (57%) were working at the time of their baseline interview, but a substantial proportion (39%) was unemployed. A small number of women (4%) were employed but not currently working because of factors such as sickness or strike.

Characteristics of women’s current jobs (among those who were employed) are shown in **Exhibit 6-1**. **Appendix B** shows additional detail by site. Most women reported that their jobs were full-time jobs with formal pay. (Self-employment was reported by only four percent of women, and casual pay was reported by three percent.)<sup>26</sup>

**Exhibit 6-1. Women’s Current Job Characteristics**

Job is full time	69%
Job provides formal pay	93%
Average monthly earnings	\$1,618
Job provides health insurance coverage	59%
Job provides fully paid leave	59%

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<sup>26</sup> Women’s sources of income during the six months prior to their partners’ incarcerations were presented in **Chapter 3**, with the most common sources of income being a formal paycheck, public assistance, money from friends and relatives, casual work, and welfare.

## Housing

Two-thirds of women (67%) reported that they lived in their own houses or apartments, and 32 percent reported that they primarily lived in someone else’s home. Very few were homeless (0.6%) or living in transitional or halfway houses (0.6%).

Among the women living in their *own* houses or apartments, 18 percent reported that the dwellings were public housing, and 18 percent reported that they were Section 8 housing. Among women primarily living in *someone else’s* house or apartment, these percentages were seven and six percent, respectively.

The majority of women (91%) reported living with at least one of their own children. On average, the women reported living with two of their children.

In addition to their own children, about half of the female sample (49%) reported living with other individuals. Most commonly, this included

- their mothers (18%) or fathers (9%),
- their sisters (7%) or brothers (7%), or
- other children or stepchildren (16%).

Over a quarter of women (28%) reported that someone with whom they were living at the time of the baseline interview was previously incarcerated, and four percent reported that any of the people with whom they currently lived used illegal drugs.

In general, the women’s feelings about the neighborhoods or communities in which they lived were mixed. As shown in **Exhibit 6-2**, although less than a third strongly agreed that their neighborhoods or communities were good places to live and only eight percent strongly agreed that employment prospects were positive, very few strongly agreed that drug selling was problematic or that it was difficult to stay out of trouble in their neighborhoods or communities.

**Exhibit 6-2. Women’s Perceptions of Neighborhood Quality**

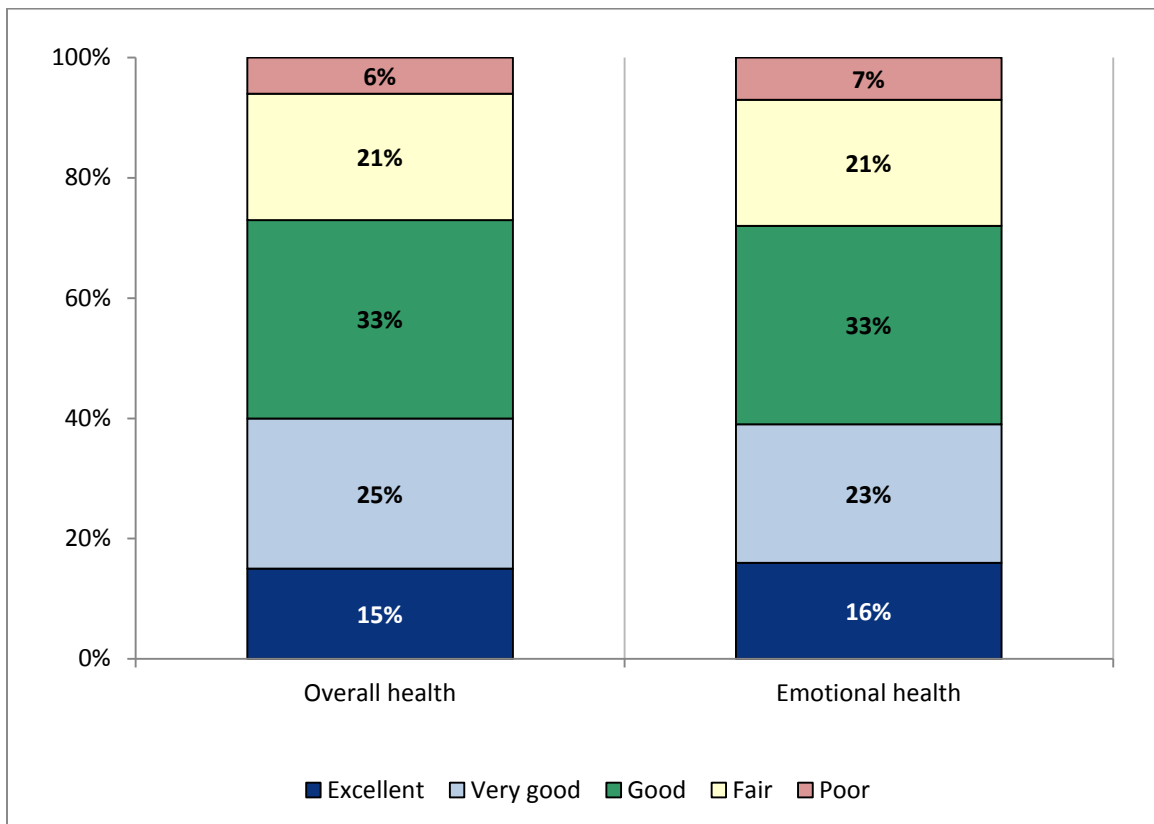
	% Who Strongly Agree	% Who Agree	% Who Disagree	% Who Strongly Disagree
Your neighborhood or community is a good place to live	28%	50%	18%	5%
Your neighborhood or community is a good place to find a job	8%	30%	45%	18%
Drug selling is a major problem in your neighborhood or community	13%	22%	34%	32%
It is hard to stay out of trouble in your neighborhood or community	4%	6%	38%	52%

## Mental and Physical Health

Forty percent of women rated their overall health as excellent or very good, and 33 percent considered it good (**Exhibit 6-3**). Percentages were almost identical for current emotional health, with 39 percent considering it excellent or very good and 33 percent rating it as good.<sup>27</sup> However, almost one in four women (23%) reported a serious health problem that limited the amount or kind of work she could do.

Data from the 1999-2013 National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) show that 40 percent of adult women below the federal poverty level reported excellent or very good health, 31 percent reported good health, and 29 percent reported fair/poor health (NHIS, CDC, n.d.). Twenty-five percent of poor adults (male and female) reported being unable to work or limited in the amount/kind of work due to a health problem in the 2003 NHIS (Schiller, Adams, & Coriaty Nelson, 2005).

**Exhibit 6-3. Women's Self-Rated Health**



Women were also asked how often (all of the time, most of the time, some of the time, a little of the time, or none of the time) they experienced specific symptoms of depression, using a nine-item version of the Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CES-D; Radloff, 1977). The most frequent symptoms were

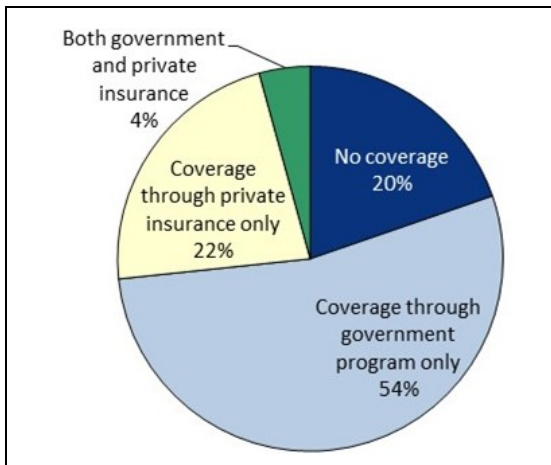
<sup>27</sup> Within couples, the male partner's ratings of overall physical and emotional health during incarceration were significantly more positive than those of the female partner ( $p$  for both differences  $< 0.001$ ).

- feeling that everything they did was an effort (19 percent of women reported feeling this way all of the time),
- feeling lonely (18 percent of women felt this way all of the time), and
- having restless sleep (17 percent of women felt this way all of the time).

When the women’s responses to the questions about individual symptoms of depression were summed and a cutoff for likely clinical depression was applied to the scores,<sup>28</sup> 62 percent of the women were classified as likely to meet criteria for clinical depression. These women were more likely to have also rated their overall emotional health as fair or poor than women who were not classified as likely clinically depressed (data not shown).<sup>29</sup>

Among low-income women in the general U.S. population, Coiro (2001) estimates that 60 percent meet clinical criteria for depression.

**Exhibit 6-4. Women’s Sources of Health Insurance**



Women’s sources of health insurance are shown in **Exhibit 6-4**. Over half of the women reported coverage only through a government program such as Medicaid, while 22 percent reported private coverage only. Twenty percent of women reported neither source of coverage, and four percent reported both.

Nineteen percent of women reported that, during the past six months, they or their children needed medical care (e.g., seeing a doctor or filling a prescription) but could not get that care because of the cost. Going without needed medical care did not appear to be related to whether the

woman reported having health insurance, as 52 percent of those with some type of health coverage and 48 percent of those without any coverage reported not getting needed medical care because of the cost (data not shown).

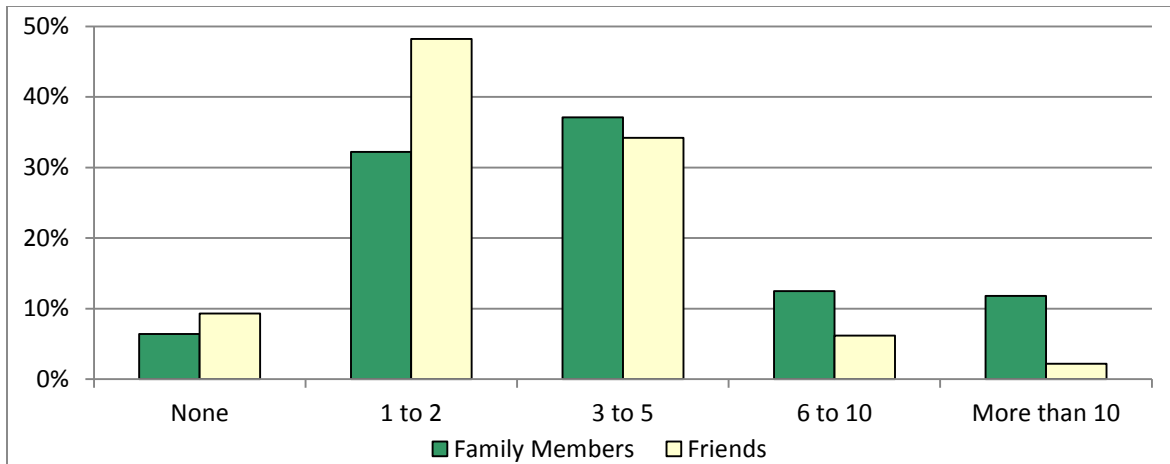
<sup>28</sup> For comparability to the CES-D-10, to create the depression score and cutoff for likely meeting criteria for clinical depression, we first collapsed the five response options used in our study (none of the time, a little of the time, some of the time, most of the time, and all of the time) into four (with all of the time and most of the time combined). The four response options were then assigned numerical values of 0-3. Each respondent’s scores for the nine depression items were summed, which resulted in depression scores ranging from 0-27. We then applied a cutoff of 9 to the total score, such that women with a depression score of 9 or higher were classified as likely meeting clinical criteria for depression. This cutoff was selected because it is equivalent to 33 percent of the maximum possible depression score, which is the approach used in applying the cutoff of 10 for the CES-D-10.

<sup>29</sup> Although depression is certainly an important component of overall emotional health, it is likely that individuals factor in a variety of other considerations when assessing their overall emotional health.

## Support from Family and Friends

Most women had close family and friends during their partners' incarcerations. Women reported an average of three to five family members and one or two friends (Exhibit 6-5).

**Exhibit 6-5. Women's Reports of the Number of Close Family Members and Friends**



Women's perceptions of the emotional support received from their extended families during their partners' incarcerations are shown in Exhibit 6-6. As shown in the exhibit, just under half of the women strongly agreed that they felt close to their families during the male partner's incarceration and that they had someone in their family to talk to. Just over half strongly agreed that they had family members who would stand by them, had family members who love them, and wanted their families to be involved in their lives.

**Exhibit 6-6. Women's Current Emotional Support from Extended Family**

	% Who Strongly Agree	% Who Agree	% Who Disagree	% Who Strongly Disagree
You feel close to your family	43%	41%	11%	4%
You have family members who will stand by you no matter what	53%	36%	8%	3%
You want your family to be involved in your life	52%	43%	4%	1%
You have someone in your family to talk to about yourself or your problems	45%	44%	8%	4%

(continued)



**Exhibit 6-6. Women’s Current Emotional Support from Extended Family (continued)**

	% Who Strongly Agree	% Who Agree	% Who Disagree	% Who Strongly Disagree
You have someone in your family to love you and make you feel wanted	52%	40%	5%	3%
You are criticized a lot or put down by your family <sup>a</sup>	9%	19%	49%	23%
Mean family emotional support score (range: 0–18, higher values indicate higher family support) <sup>b</sup>	13.7			

<sup>a</sup>Item was reverse coded in family emotional support score.

<sup>b</sup>As shown in **Chapter 5**, men averaged 13.3 on the same family emotional support score. Within couples, the female partner reported higher family emotional support than the male partner ( $p < 0.01$ ).

Women’s perceptions of the tangible support they expected to receive from friends and family members after the partners’ release are presented in **Chapter 8**.

## Substance Use

During the six months prior to the men’s incarcerations, 43 percent of women reported alcohol consumption of any kind and 26 percent of women reported the use of any other drugs (marijuana use and misuse of prescription drugs were the most commonly reported substances). These women were asked about the extent to which their use of alcohol and other drugs caused problems in their lives *currently* (at the time of the baseline interview). A moderate proportion of women reported problems associated with their use:

- 45 percent of women who used drugs and 25 percent of women who consumed alcohol felt that they should reduce their use.
- 37 percent of women who used drugs and 16 percent of women who consumed alcohol felt bad or guilty about their use.

Data from the 2013 National Survey on Drug Use and Health show that among young adults aged 18-25, 47.5 percent of women (and 57.1 percent of men) are current drinkers. The rate of binge drinking for women is approximately half that of men (14.7 percent compared to 30.7 percent) within that age group. With regard to illicit drug use, 7.3 percent of women aged 12 and older reported any illicit drug use within the past 30 days (compared to 11.5 percent of men) (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014).

- Of the women who consumed alcohol, five percent reported that they often and 17 percent reported that they sometimes drank five or more drinks on a single occasion.<sup>30</sup> Just under half (47%) reported that they never drank five or more drinks, and one-third (32%) reported that they rarely drank five or more drinks on a single occasion.

## **Policy Context Highlights**

**Over half of the women were working full time and living in their own homes; almost all were parenting.** Fifty-seven percent of women were working at the time of their baseline interview, most working full time and earning an average of \$1,618 per month. Two-thirds of women (67%) reported that they lived in their own homes or apartments, and most (91%) were living with at least one of their own children.

**Women's reports of physical and emotional health were fairly good, but almost one in four experienced health-related limitations.** Most women rated both their overall health and their current emotional health as good, very good, or excellent. However, women's reports were significantly worse than those of their partners, with almost one in four women (23%) reporting a serious health problem that limited the amount or kind of work she could do.

**Most women had access to public or private health coverage.** Public coverage was twice as common as private coverage. However, when employed, over half of working women reported that their jobs provided health insurance coverage (59%) and fully paid leave (59%). A small proportion of women (20%) reported having no insurance, and a similar proportion reported that they or their child(ren) had to go without needed medical care.

**Women reported much less alcohol and drug use than their partners.** During the six months prior to their partners' incarcerations, 43 percent of women reported alcohol consumption of any kind, and 26 percent reported the use of any other drugs. During same time period, 63 percent of men reported binge drinking and 71 percent reported using at least one illicit drug.

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<sup>30</sup> For women, binge drinking is typically defined as four or more drinks on a single occasion.

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# Chapter 7. Children’s Experiences during Their Fathers’ Incarcerations

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This chapter describes the experiences of the 1,265 “focal children” during their fathers’ incarcerations, including the children’s

- living arrangements,
- school attendance and performance,
- extracurricular activities,
- behavior problems, and
- delinquency.

## Who Are the Focal Children?

The focal children ranged in age from 0 to 17 years and were, on average, eight years old at the time of the baseline interview. About half were boys and half were girls. Nearly two-thirds lived with their fathers prior to the incarceration. Almost all (97%) were parented in some way by the female survey partner.

As described in **Chapter 1**, a focal child was identified during each male’s baseline interview as the focus of additional questions regarding parenting and child well-being. From all of the man’s children, one child was selected, with priority given to children who were parented by both members of the study couple and who were closest in age to eight. Among the 1,482 men with a partner who also completed a baseline interview, a focal child was selected for 1,265.<sup>31</sup> Detailed information on the focal child was obtained from each man and his partner, as long as the man reported that the partner parented the child in some way.

This chapter is based on what both parents reported about the focal children during their baseline interviews.

## Living Arrangements

The vast majority of focal children were living with their mothers during their fathers’ incarcerations. Ninety percent of the children were living with the female survey partner (who was not necessarily the child’s mother) at the time of baseline data collection.

## Do Children Know About Their Father’s Incarceration?

In the baseline interview, male and female respondents were asked if the focal child was aware that his/her father was incarcerated. Twenty-two percent of men and 23 percent of women reported that the focal child did not know that his/her father was incarcerated.

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<sup>31</sup> A focal child was not selected for men who did not have any children under the age of 18.

Many children lived in households with other family members. Other individuals with whom the focal children lived—regardless of whether the children lived with the female partners—include

- maternal grandparents, reported by 16 percent of men and 18 percent of women;
- paternal grandparents, reported by 5 percent of men and women;
- biological mothers other than the female partner, reported by 3 percent of women; and
- other blood relatives of the children, reported by 21 percent of the men and 36 percent of the women.

Only 0.8 percent of men and 0.7 percent of women reported that the focal child was in the custody of social services at the time of the baseline interview.

When asked if the child had *ever* been placed in foster care or sent to live with a relative or friend, 10 percent of men and women answered affirmatively.

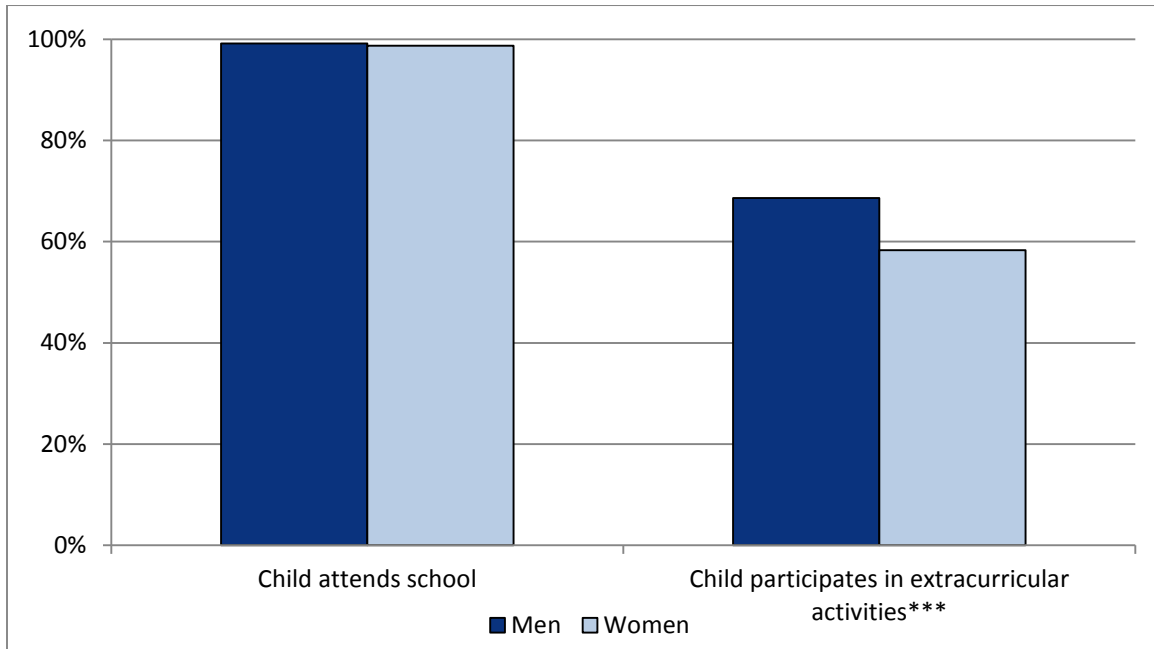
## School Attendance and Performance

School attendance and participation in extracurricular activities are shown for focal children who were at least six years of age at the time of the baseline interview ( $n = 741$ ) in **Exhibit 7-1**. As shown in the exhibit, nearly all (99 percent, according to both men and women) were attending school. The largest numbers of focal children were in second or third grade. Within couples, the male partner was more likely than the female partner to report that the child participated in extracurricular activities.

Parents’ reports of the children’s performance in school are shown in **Exhibit 7-2**. Although both men and women felt that the children were doing well in school, within couples, the male partner rated the child’s performance higher (on the five-point scale) than the female partner ( $p < 0.001$ ).

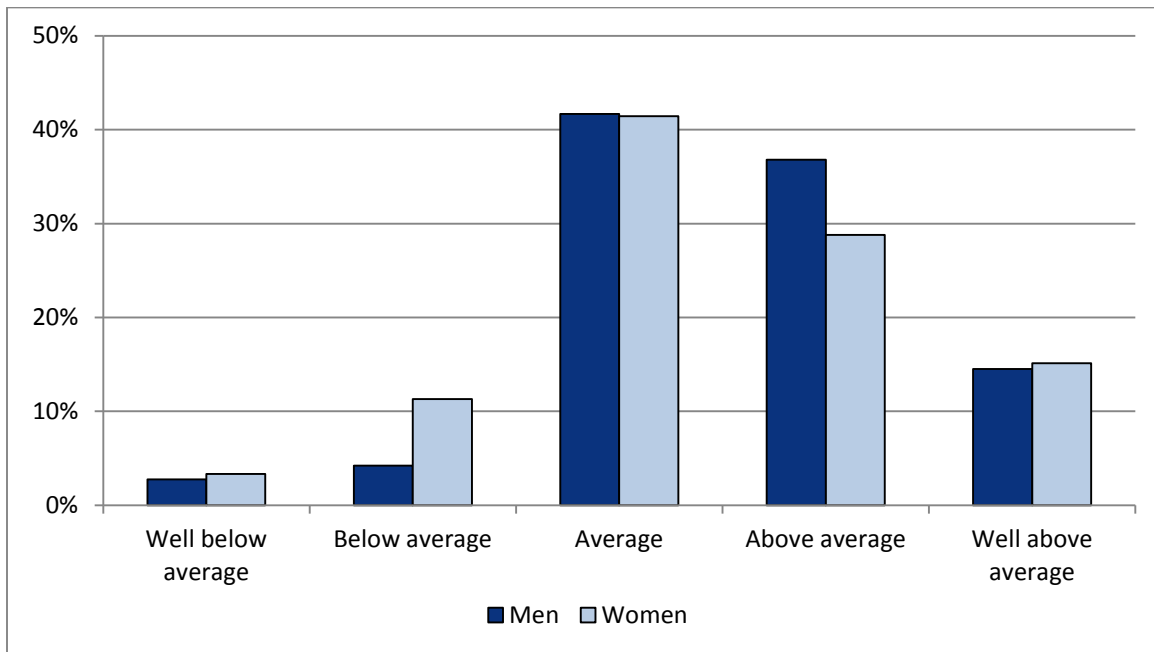
Twenty-five percent of women and 19 percent of men reported that the focal child was ever suspended or expelled from school. Eighteen percent of women and 11 percent of men reported that the child ever repeated a grade in school. Within couples, the male partner was significantly less likely than the female partner to report both that the child was ever suspended or expelled ( $p < 0.001$ ) and that the child ever repeated a grade ( $p < 0.001$ ).

**Exhibit 7-1. Focal Children's School Attendance and Extracurricular Activities (Children Aged 6 to 17)**



Note: \*=  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*=  $p < 0.01$ , and \*\*\*=  $p < 0.001$  for matched pair t-test of differences between male and female respondents in each couple.

**Exhibit 7-2. Parents' Assessments of School Performance (Children Aged 6 to 17)**



## Behavioral and Emotional Issues

For focal children who were at least four years of age (n = 933), men and women reported on the children’s social skills and internalizing disorders (**Exhibit 7-3**). The measures used in the MFS-IP study are based on those used in the National Survey of Children’s Health (NSCH), a national study on the health of the general U.S. child population (Blumberg et al., 2012). For comparative purposes, national data from the 2007 NSCH for low-income children aged 6–17 are shown in the exhibit. Though it is difficult to draw conclusions because of the differences between men’s and women’s reports and the slight differences in response scales used in the two studies, the patterns of responses show some similarity but suggest that some negative behaviors might be more common among the focal children in the MFS-IP sample.

**Exhibit 7-3. Focal Children’s Behavior (Children Aged 4 to 17)**

	MFS-IP Sample		2007 NSCH Sample, Low Income (0–199% FPV) Children Aged 6–17
	Men’s Reports (children aged 4–17)	Women’s Reports (children aged 4–17)	
Child bullies***			
Always or Usually	4%	8%	4%
Sometimes, Rarely,† or Never	73%	86%	96%
Don’t know‡	24%	6%	n/a
Child shows respect for teachers/neighbors			
Always or Usually	75%	80%	91%
Sometimes, Rarely, or Never	10%	17%	10%
Don’t know	15%	3%	n/a
Child gets along with other children			
Always or Usually	72%	78%	84%
Sometimes, Rarely, or Never	17%	20%	16%
Don’t know	11%	2%	n/a
Child is disobedient***			
Always or Usually	6%	12%	8%
Sometimes, Rarely, or Never	83%	85%	92%
Don’t know	12%	3%	n/a
Child is stubborn, sullen, or irritable***			
Always or Usually	13%	24%	14%
Sometimes, Rarely, or Never	74%	73%	86%
Don’t know	14%	2%	n/a
Child feels worthless or inferior			
Always or Usually	1%	2%	6%
Sometimes, Rarely, or Never	68%	83%	95%
Don’t know	30%	15%	n/a

(continued)

**Exhibit 7-3. Focal Children's Behavior (Children Aged 4 to 17) (continued)**

	MFS-IP Sample		2007 NSCH Sample, Low Income (0–199% FPV) Children Aged 6–17
	Men's Reports (children aged 4–17)	Women's Reports (children aged 4–17)	
Child is unhappy, sad, or depressed			
Always or Usually	3%	4%	3%
Sometimes, Rarely, or Never	72%	87%	97%
Don't know	25%	9%	n/a
Child is withdrawn and does not get involved with others			
Always or Usually	2%	2%	5%
Sometimes, Rarely, or Never	78%	94%	95%
Don't know	20%	4%	n/a

‡ "Rarely" was included as a response option in the NSCH study but not MFS-IP. "Don't know" was included as a response option in the MFS-IP study but not NSCH. Therefore, caution should be used when comparing the two data sources.

Note: \* =  $p < 0.05$ , \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ , and \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$  for matched pair t-test of differences between male and female respondents in each couple.

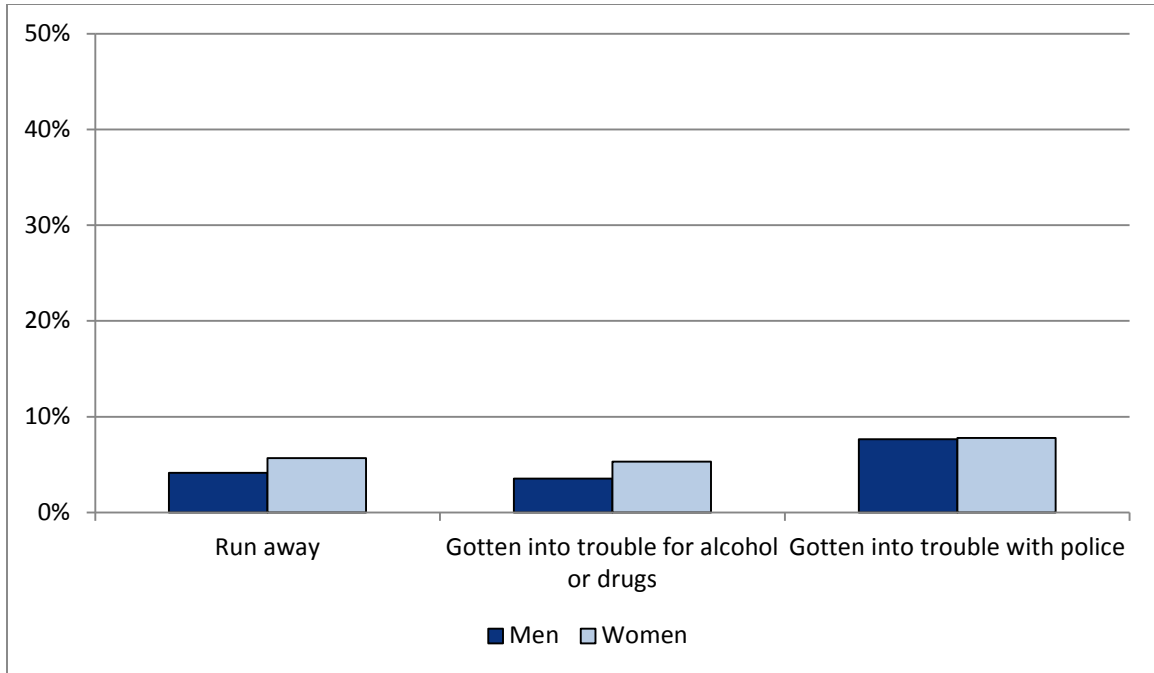
Very few parents indicated that the focal children experienced extremely poor social skills or internalizing disorders. The most commonly reported behavior was the child being stubborn, sullen, or irritable. Within couples, the male partner was significantly less likely than the female partner to report that the child bullied others; was disobedient; and was stubborn, sullen, or irritable. However, as discussed below, because more men selected "Don't know" as a response option, comparisons within couples are difficult.

Because the vast majority of focal children were living with the female respondents at the time of the interview (and none were living with the male respondents, who were incarcerated), women likely had a greater awareness of the children's behavior. Indeed, more men than women reported that they did not know how to answer the questions in this series. However, even mothers had difficulty reporting on the children's feelings of worthlessness/inferiority and unhappiness/sadness/depression.

Parents of focal children who were 10 years of age or older ( $n = 356$ ) were asked whether the child had ever run away, gotten into trouble for alcohol or drugs, or gotten into trouble with the police (**Exhibit 7-4**). All of these experiences were very rare. The most common, getting in trouble with the police, was experienced by eight percent of focal children age 10 or older, according to both men and women. Within couples, men's and women's reports on these behaviors did not differ significantly from one another.



**Exhibit 7-4. Problematic Behaviors (Children Aged 10 to 17)**



### Policy Context Highlights

**Almost all focal children were living with their mothers** during the fathers’ incarcerations, with many living in households with other family members. Less than one percent of children were in the custody of social services.

**School attendance was almost universal (99 percent).** However, a significant minority of parents (25 percent of women and 19 percent of men) reported that the focal child had ever been suspended or expelled from school. Eighteen percent of women and 11 percent of men reported that the child ever repeated a grade in school.

**Mothers’ reports indicate that children may be having some adjustment problems.** As with nationally representative samples of children of a similar age, few parents indicated that the focal children displayed behavioral or emotional problems, but the prevalence of several negative behaviors appeared to be higher than those reported for the National Survey of Children’s Health low-income sample.

**Many men were unaware of their children’s behavioral or emotional health during their incarceration.** When asked about the children’s current status, a relatively high proportion of fathers did not know about the children’s feelings or specific behaviors.

**A significant minority of parents did not tell the focal children about the fathers’ incarcerations.** Almost a quarter of both men and women reported that the focal child did not know that his/her father was incarcerated.

# Chapter 8. Expectations for Release

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This chapter describes men's and women's expectations for what their lives will be like after the men's release, including

- intentions to continue the intimate relationships,
- arrangements for the focal children,
- expectations for support from extended family and peers,
- expectations about employment and income, and
- criminal involvement.

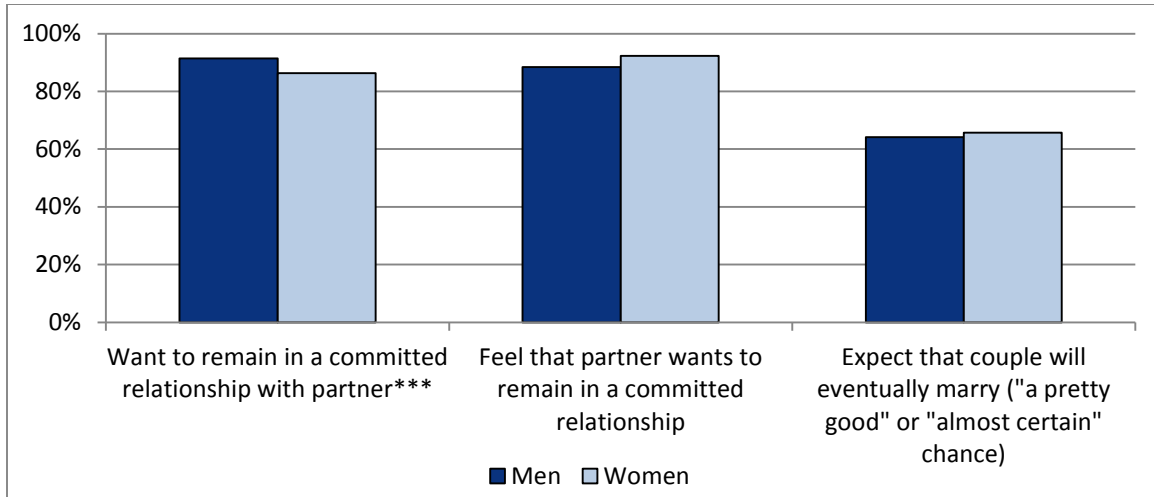
At the time most couples reported these expectations, the men's release was still an average of 3.5 years away, with a range of one day to 78.6 years.

## Intimate Relationships

Men and women who considered the couple's relationship to be an intimate one (as opposed to coparenting only) at the time of the baseline interview (1,386 men and 1,252 women) responded to several questions about the future of the relationship (**Exhibit 8-1**). The majority of men and women intended to remain in a committed relationship with their survey partner after the man's release and felt that their survey partner wanted to remain in a committed relationship with them. Within couples, men were more likely than their partners to expect to remain in committed relationships after release. Among intimate couples who were not married, about two-thirds (64 percent of men and 66 percent of women) felt that the couple would marry at some point in the future.

All sample members (1,482 couples) were asked whether they expected to live with their survey partner upon the man's release. The majority of men (83%) and women (75%) expected to live together. Within couples, the male partner was significantly more likely than the female partner to expect the couple to live together after the man was released ( $p < 0.001$ ). Site-specific details are shown in **Appendix B**.

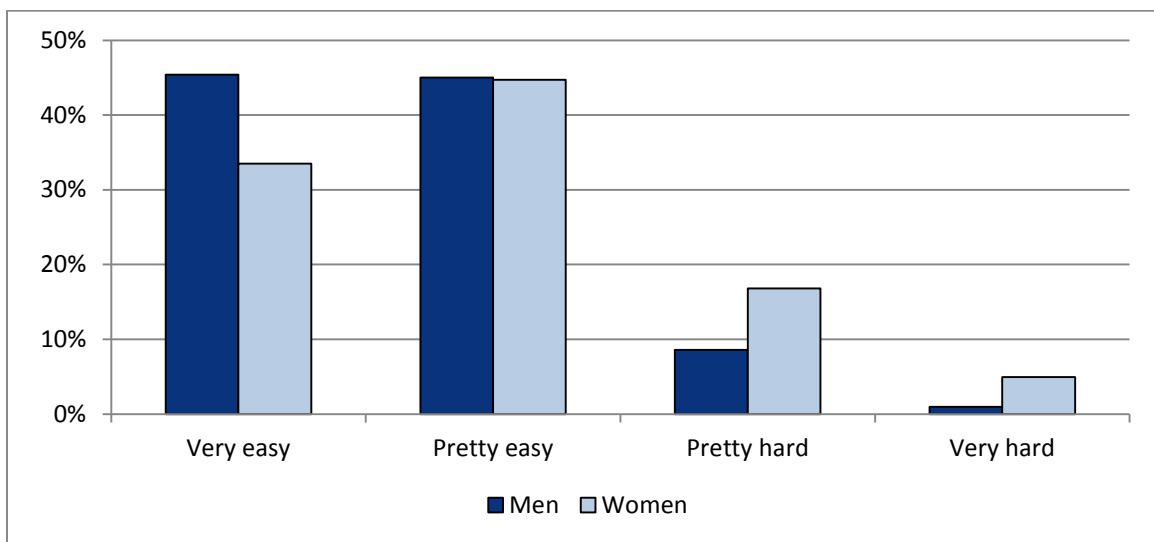
**Exhibit 8-1. Plans for Intimate Relationships after Release**



Note: \* =  $p < 0.05$ , \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ , and \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$  for matched pair t-test of differences between male and female respondents in each couple.

Men’s and women’s perceptions of how easy or hard their relationships with one another would be after release are shown in **Exhibit 8-2**. Although 45 percent of men felt that it would be very easy for the couple to have a good relationship after release, 34 percent of women felt this way. In contrast, 22 percent of women and 10 percent of men felt that it would be hard or very hard for the couple to have a good relationship after the male partner’s release. Within couples, men’s ratings of how easy it would be for the couple to have a good relationship were significantly more positive than those of the female partners ( $p < 0.001$ ).

**Exhibit 8-2. Anticipated Difficulty in “Having a Good Relationship” after Release**



Challenges that respondents anticipated might arise in their relationships after release are shown in **Exhibit 8-3**. Although the top concerns were the same for both men and women, within couples, the female partner was significantly more likely than the male partner to anticipate that trust issues, anger issues, and concerns about his ability to meet her expectations would be a challenge to the couple's post-release relationship. In contrast, the male partner was significantly more likely than the female partner to report that problems or new situations that have arisen since his incarceration would be a challenge in the relationship.

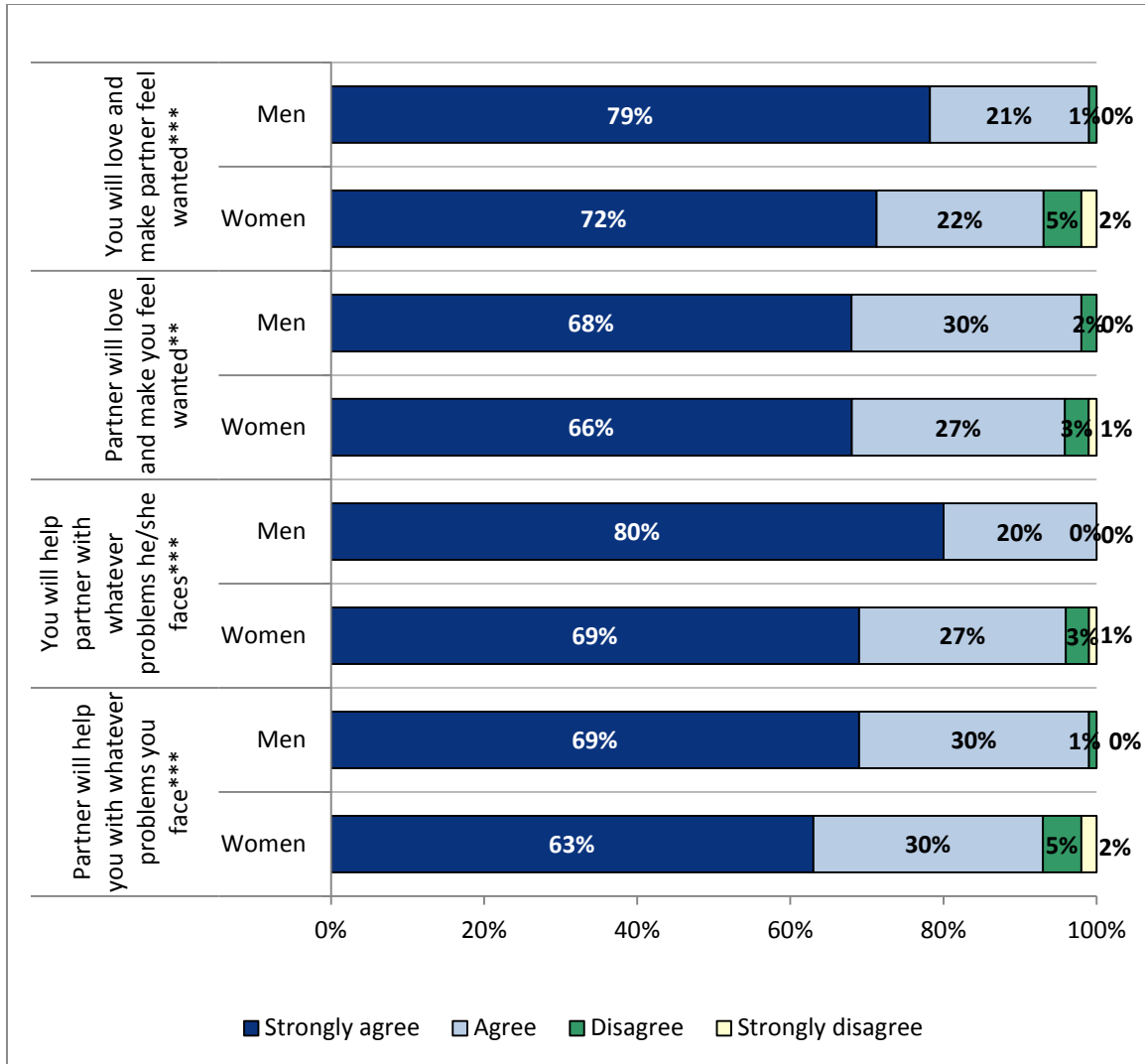
**Exhibit 8-3. Anticipated Challenges to Post-Release Intimate Relationships**

	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
His having missed out on so much that happened in her life	54%	55%
His trying to meet her expectations for him finding a job, staying clean, and helping her financially***	47%	55%
Problems or new situations that have come up since incarceration***	43%	37%
Being able to trust partner***	24%	38%
Being able to feel close to partner	27%	30%
Being angry at partner or not wanting to see partner***	5%	10%
Partner being angry at him/her or not wanting to see him/her	6%	8%

Note: \* =  $p < 0.05$ , \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ , and \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$  for matched pair t-test of differences between male and female respondents in each couple.

The couple's expectations for mutual support are shown in **Exhibit 8-4**. Both men and women expressed a strong desire to support and be supported by their partners after release. However, within couples, men expressed significantly more commitment than women to making the relationship work and were more likely to expect to receive support from their partners.

**Exhibit 8-4. Expectations of Mutual Support after Release**

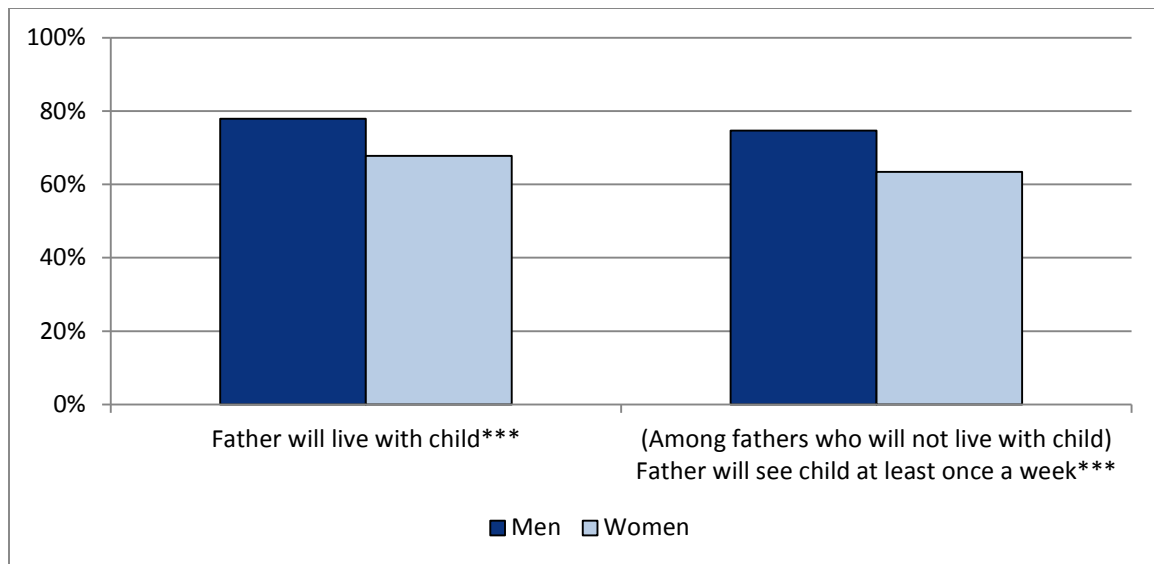


Note: \* =  $p < 0.05$ , \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ , and \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$  for matched pair t-test of differences between male and female respondents in each couple.

### Arrangements for the Focal Child

The 1,262 couples involved in parenting a focal child (see **Chapter 1** for details on how the focal child was selected) were asked about their expectations for the father’s relationship with the focal child after his release. As shown in **Exhibit 8-5**, 78 percent of men and 68 percent of women expected the father to live with the focal child after release.

**Exhibit 8-5. Plans for Fathers' Contact with Focal Children after Release**



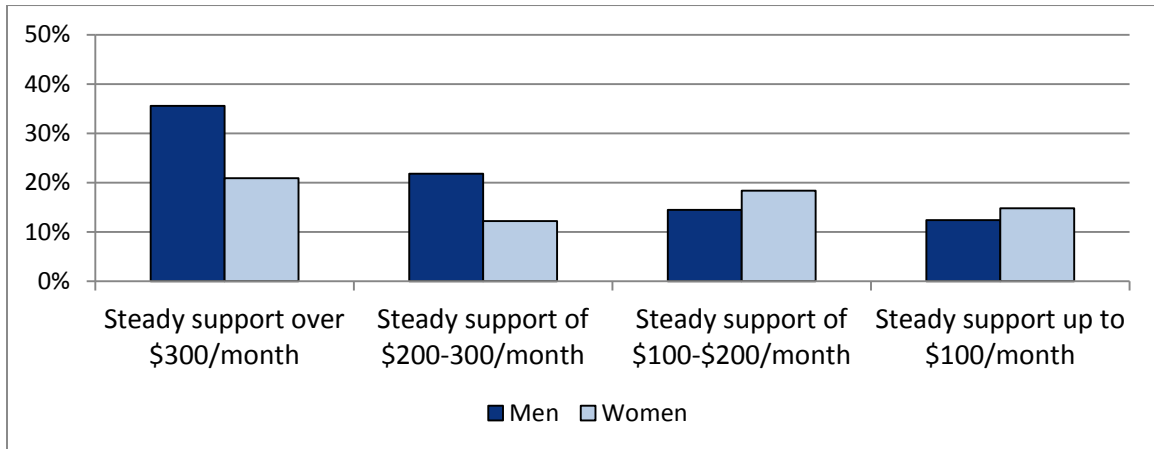
Note: \* =  $p < 0.05$ , \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ , and \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$  for matched pair t-test of differences between male and female respondents in each couple.

Among the fathers who did not plan (or were not expected) to live with their children, expectations for frequent contact were high: 75 percent of men and 63 percent of women expected that the fathers would see their children at least once a week. Within couples, the female partner was less likely than the male partner to anticipate his living with the focal child after release and expected less frequent contact between the father and the child.

When asked about financial support for the focal children, 92 percent of men and 62 percent of women reported that the fathers would financially support the focal children after release. Within couples, the female partner was less likely than the male partner to expect the father to financially support the child after release ( $p < 0.001$ ).

Expectations for the degree of financial support expected are shown in **Exhibit 8-6** (for nonresidential focal children only). Expectations for financial support for the focal children were not significantly different within study couples, on average.

**Exhibit 8-6. Plans for Fathers’ Financial Support for Nonresident Focal Children after Release**



Men also reported on how difficult it would be for them to have good relationships with their children and what they expected would be the biggest challenges in these relationships after release.<sup>32</sup> Many men felt that it would be very easy (56%) or easy (35%) to have good relationships with their children after release. Less than 10 percent felt that it would be hard or very hard. As shown in **Exhibit 8-7**, the most commonly reported challenge anticipated by the men in their post-release relationships with their children was the same challenge reported for the intimate relationships (**Exhibit 8-3**)—having missed out on so much that happened in the children’s lives.

**Exhibit 8-7. Men’s Anticipated Challenges to Relationships with Children after Release**

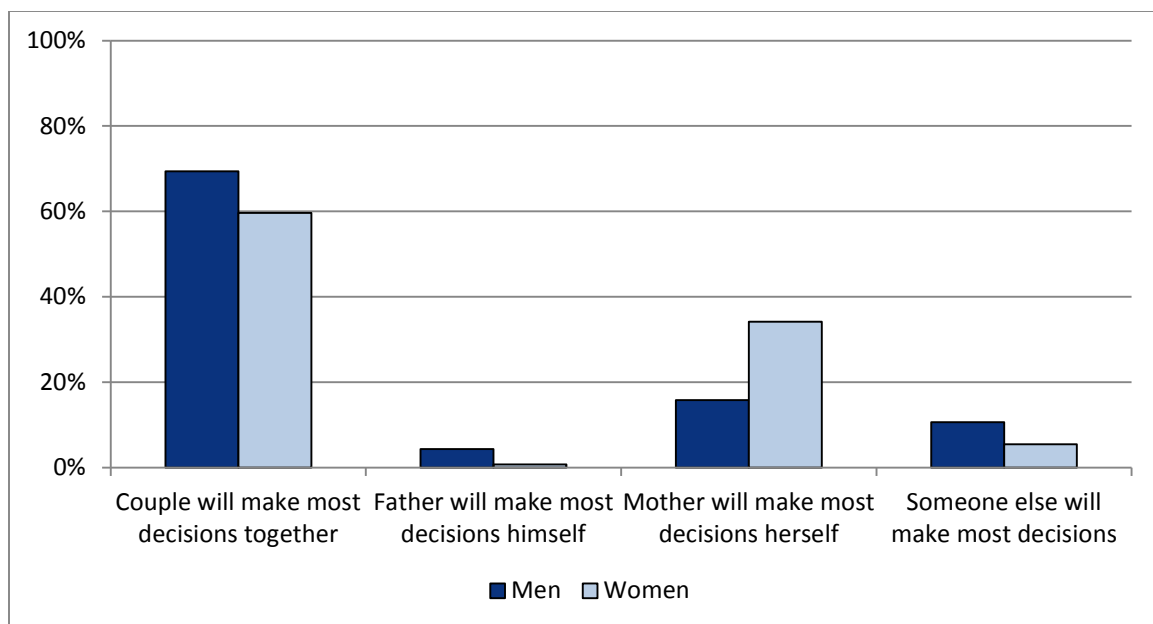
	% of Men
His having missed out on so much that happened in the children’s lives	78%
Getting the children to trust him or open up to him after the time apart	50%
Having money to financially support or buy things for the children	44%
Dealing with people who don’t want him to see the children	24%
The children being angry at him or not wanting to see him	18%
Him not being in a stable enough housing and financial situation to be able to spend time with the children	17%
Finding transportation for visits or activities	11%
Not knowing how to get in contact with the children	8%
His lifestyle not being a healthy one for kids	5%

<sup>32</sup> This set of questions was not limited to the focal child and instead asked about the fathers’ relationships with their children generally.

Whereas men were asked about their relationships with (all of) their children, women were asked specifically about the men's relationships with the focal children after release. Just over three quarters of women (79%) felt that it would be easy or pretty easy for the father to have a good relationship with the focal child after his release, and 21 percent felt that it would be hard or very hard. Women anticipated that the father would encounter similar challenges in his post-release relationship with the focal child as the fathers reported for their children in general—having missed out on so much that happened in the focal child's life (reported by 74 percent of women), getting the child to trust him or open up to him (59%), and having money to financially support the child (35%).

**Exhibit 8-8** shows men's and women's reports about how decisions would be made about the focal children after the men's release. The decision-making arrangement most commonly reported by both men and women was joint decision making. However, within couples, the male partner was significantly more likely than the female partner to expect that the couple would make joint decisions about the focal child ( $p < 0.001$ ).

**Exhibit 8-8. Plans for Making Decisions about Focal Children after Release**



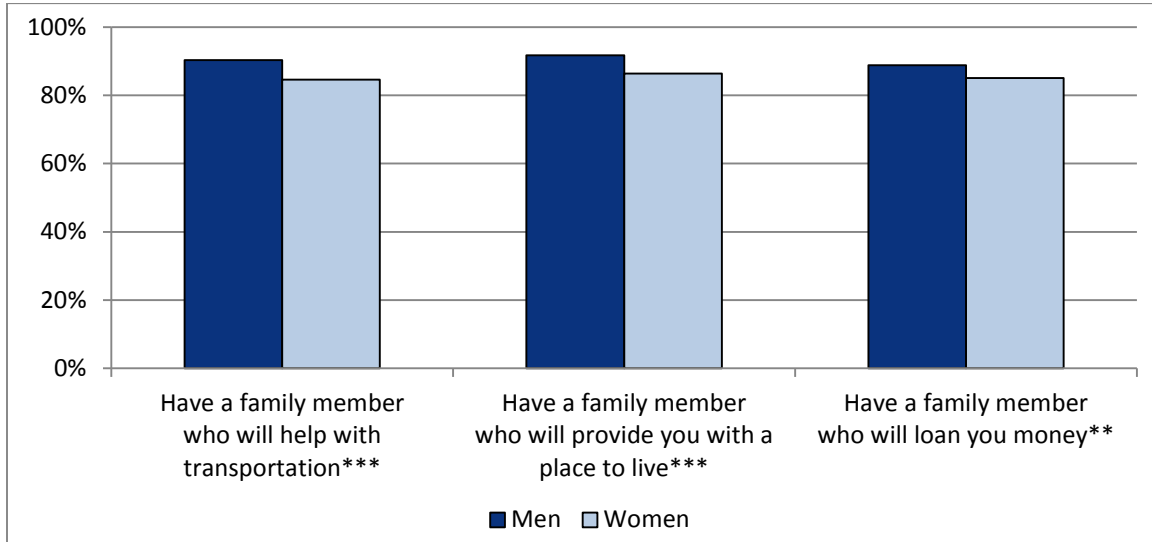
## Extended Family and Peer Relationships

Most men and women in the sample felt that they would be able to count on their extended families (i.e., family members other than each other and their children) to provide tangible forms of support after the men's release (**Exhibit 8-9**). Within couples,



men were significantly more likely than their female partners to anticipate having an extended family member who would loan them money and help with both transportation and housing.

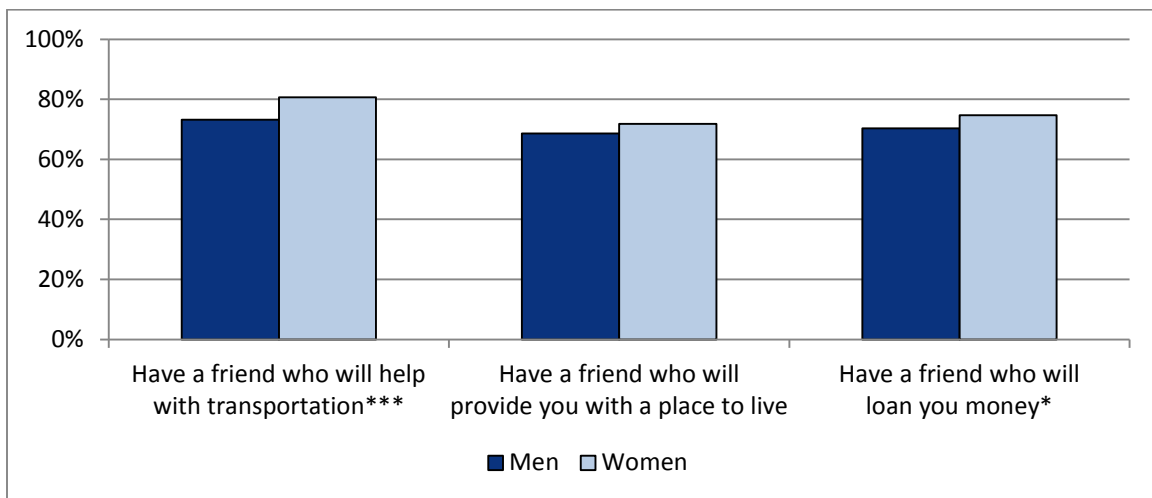
**Exhibit 8-9. Expected Instrumental Support from Extended Family after Release**



Note: \* =  $p < 0.05$ , \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ , and \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$  for matched pair t-test of differences between male and female respondents in each couple.

Expected post-release support from friends is shown in **Exhibit 8-10**. In contrast to the pattern for tangible support from extended family (**Exhibit 8-9**), within couples, the female partner was more likely than the male partner to anticipate having a friend who would help with transportation and loan them money after the man’s release.

**Exhibit 8-10. Expected Instrumental Support from Friends after Release**

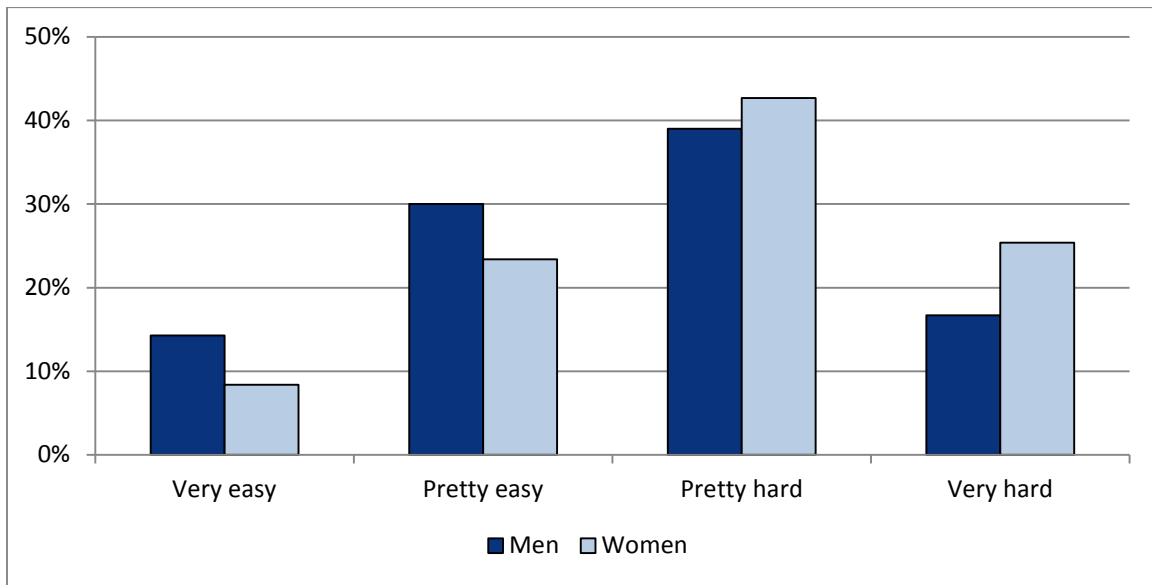


Note: \* =  $p < 0.05$ , \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ , and \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$  for matched pair t-test of differences between male and female respondents in each couple.

## Employment and Finances

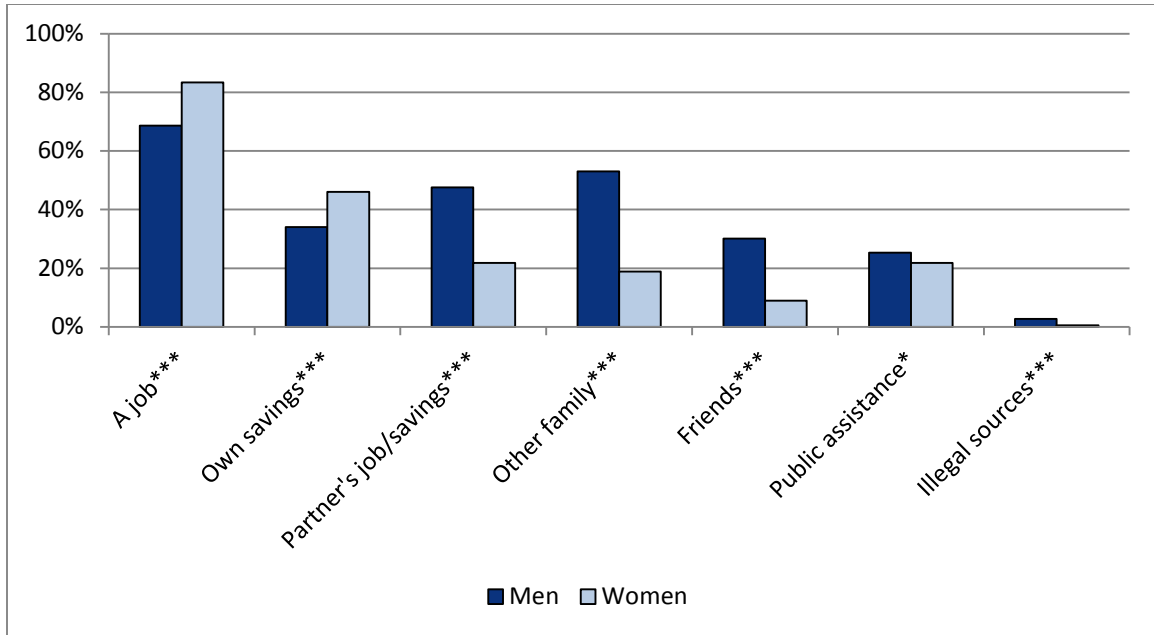
Men's and women's assessments of the men's prospects of finding a job after release are shown in **Exhibit 8-11**. Both men and women recognized that it would be difficult for the men to find jobs. However, within couples, men were significantly more positive about the ease with which they would find a job than their female partners ( $p < 0.001$ ). Men were also more optimistic than their partners about how easy it would be for them to *keep* a job once they got one ( $p < 0.001$ , data not shown).

**Exhibit 8-11. Anticipated Difficulty with the Male Partner "Finding a Decent Job" after Release**



Sources of financial support that the men and women expect to have in the first month after the men's release are shown in **Exhibit 8-12**. The most frequently reported source of income for both men and women was a job. Within couples, women were significantly more likely than their partners to anticipate this source of income, in addition to their own savings. Several other differences within couples were evident, with men more likely than their partners to anticipate receiving income from their partner, their extended family, their friends, public assistance, and illegal activity.

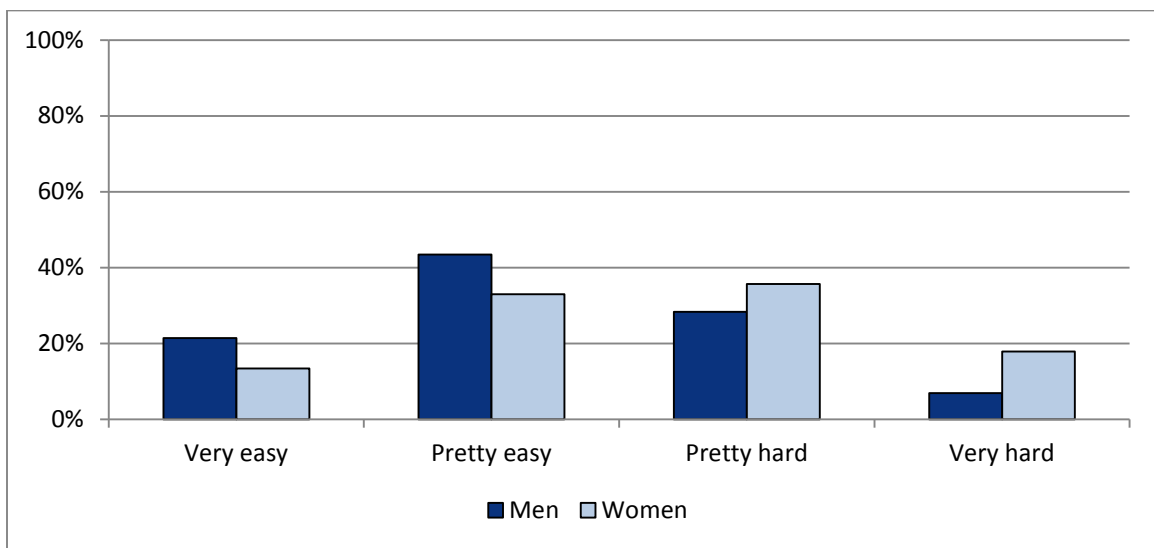
**Exhibit 8-12. Expected Sources of Income after Release**



Note: \* =  $p < 0.05$ , \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ , and \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$  for matched pair t-test of differences between male and female respondents in each couple.

Men's and women's assessments of the male partner's prospects of earning enough money to support himself after release are shown in **Exhibit 8-13**. Within couples, men were more optimistic than their female partners about their ability to make enough money to support themselves after release ( $p < 0.001$ ).

**Exhibit 8-13. Expected Difficulty with Male Partner Making Enough Money to Support Himself after Release**

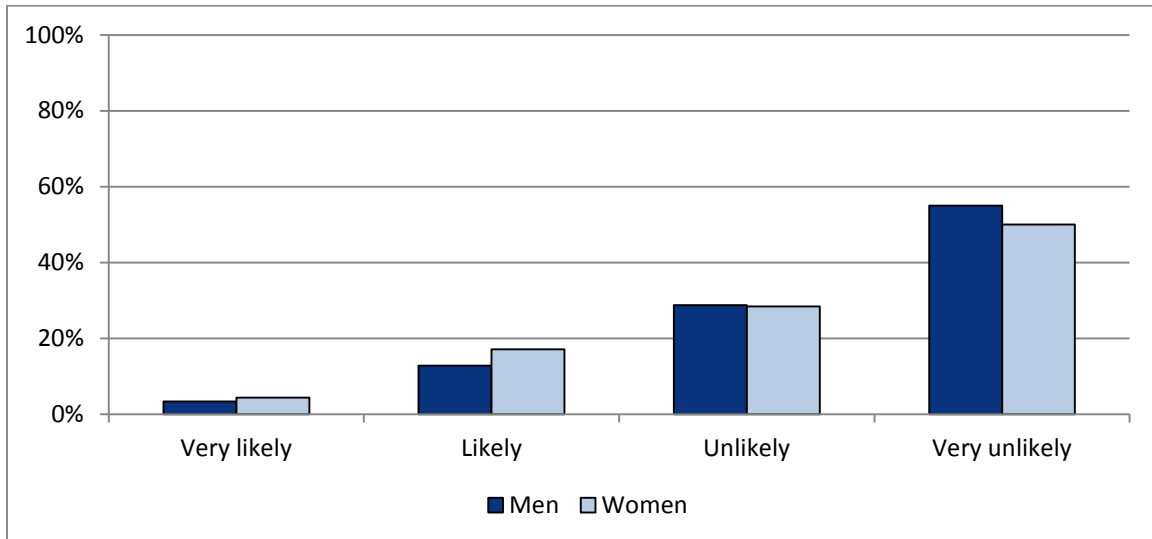


## Criminal Involvement

Consistent with the pattern of very few men anticipating that they would have money coming in from illegal sources after their release (**Exhibit 8-12**), very few (3%) expected that they would ever be sent back to jail or prison in the future. A higher percentage (16%) felt that it was likely or very likely that they would use illegal drugs after their release, but most men planned on not using drugs (**Exhibit 8-14**).

Women were not very optimistic about the men's likelihood of staying out of trouble. Nineteen percent felt that the male partner would be sent back to jail or prison someday, and 22 percent felt that it was likely or very likely that he would use illegal drugs after his release (**Exhibit 8-14**). Within couples, women reported significantly less optimism than their partners on both measures ( $p < 0.001$  for recidivism and  $p < 0.01$  for illegal drug use).

**Exhibit 8-14. Expected Likelihood of Male Partner Using Illegal Drugs after Release**



## Policy Context Highlights

**The vast majority of study couples expected to live together and continue their relationships post-release.** Overall, 83 percent of men and 75 percent of women expected they would live together after release. Among respondents who considered the couple's relationship to be an intimate one (as opposed to coparenting only), the vast majority of men (91%) and women (86%) intended to remain in a committed relationship after the man's release. Over 90 percent of men reported that it would be very easy or pretty easy for the couple to have a good relationship after his release. These reports were significantly more positive than those of their partners, but almost 80 percent of women also reported that it would be very easy or pretty easy.

**Men and women had different expectations for parental involvement after release.**

Most men (78%) and women (68%) expected that the father would live with the focal child after release, and 92 percent of men and 62 percent of women expected that he would financially support the child after release. Although both partners most often reported expecting to make decisions jointly, men were significantly more likely to anticipate that the couple would make decisions together.

**Men and women were optimistic about receiving tangible support from family and friends during reentry, and men were optimistic about their reemployment prospects.**

Women were significantly less optimistic than the male partner about the likelihood of his finding a decent job, using illegal drugs, and being reincarcerated after his release. Although the majority of both men and women felt that it would be pretty hard or very hard for the man to find a decent job after release, most men did not plan to utilize public assistance.

# Chapter 9. Conclusion

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## Summary of Baseline Descriptive Findings

Descriptive data from these baseline interviews with men in prison and their female partners reveal some of the complexities associated with maintaining positive family relationships during incarceration.

On the one hand, among the 1,482 men whose partners responded to the baseline interview, the average couple had been together for over seven years and had parented two children together, despite being separated by the incarceration for over three years. More than half of the couples had lived together and shared an income prior to incarceration, and thought the incarceration brought them closer together; similarly, more than half of the men were in contact with their partners and focal children at least weekly during the incarceration. Almost all fathers reported having provided at least some financial support to at least one child prior to incarceration. More than half of the women reported working full time at positions that offered health benefits and paid leave during the men's incarcerations.

On the other hand, life appeared bleak for many respondents on several indicators of life before and during the men's incarcerations. More than a third of the men were unemployed and/or had at least one child they did not support prior to incarceration. Close to one half of men and women reported experiencing physical abuse from their partners, and 10 percent of men and 17 percent of women reported severe physical or sexual abuse prior to incarceration. Additionally, close to three out of four men reported using illicit substances prior to incarceration, and over one-third reported that all or most of their friends used illegal drugs. During the incarceration, more than a third of men reported little contact with their partners and/or children. More than a third of the women were unemployed, and almost a quarter reported having a serious health problem that prevented them from working during the men's incarcerations.

## Context for Policy Development

These initial descriptive findings suggest many challenges for policy makers to consider when developing policies to address the needs of this diverse group of incarcerated fathers and their families. Findings among the study sample that may be useful in guiding decisions on how to structure supports for families include

- **Family structures are complex.** Supports for families affected by incarceration must take into account the complicated reality of pre-incarceration family life, rather than attempting simply to address the disruption prompted by incarceration.

- **Research and practice with this population may need to target families earlier in the incarceration term to engage both members of the couple.** The analysis of 509 men whose partners did not respond to the baseline interview—a likely indicator of tenuous relationships—highlights this finding. (This analysis is shown in **Appendix A.**) Men whose partners did not complete the interview had been incarcerated longer, reported more relationship strain, and reported much less in-person contact with partners and children. (Future multivariate analyses will explore the apparent correlation between family relationship strains and the point in the incarceration term at which a father was interviewed.)
- **Maintenance of contact with family members during incarceration is not easy.** Both partners reported distance, costs, and the atmosphere of the prison environment as being barriers to contact. To facilitate contact, programs may have to address many institutional barriers, using strategies such as creating child-friendly visitation rooms within prisons, calling on utility companies to establish reasonable telephone rates for calls placed from prisons, and challenging correctional policies that place many residents hundreds of miles from their home communities. In addition, video visitation as a supplement to opportunities for in-person contact may help some families remain connected.
- **Efforts to support fathers and children in maintaining or improving their relationships (such as through supported visitation) may be helpful.** Although many couples seem to get closer during an incarceration, this is usually not the case for fathers and children. This suggests that interventions need to address the very different experiences among family members of the same incarcerated man.
- **Women affected by a partner’s incarceration might benefit from additional types of support.** Over three-quarters of the female sample (82%) reported at least one of the following conditions: likely clinical depression, physical limitations relating to work, lack of health insurance, or unemployment. This suggests that policies that take into account stressors for women affected by incarceration (e.g., strains associated with single parenting, behavioral or mental illness, financial problems) could be beneficial.
- **Negotiating reentry as a family requires realistic planning.** Men, but to a lesser degree their partners, reported very optimistic expectations about their reentry success. Previous research has shown that pre-release optimism is associated with post-release success for reentry samples (Burnett & Maruna, 2004), so being optimistic could be important for couples’ reentry success. However, it is possible that within couples, one-sided optimism could lead to post-release conflict, abrupt changes in housing plans, and associated parole violation risks. Couples facing reentry need help to develop realistic and mutually agreed-upon plans for a healthy family life after release.

- **Substance abuse is a major issue for justice-involved men and their social networks.** Many of the men and some of the women were using illicit drugs prior to incarceration. Substance abuse is a significant predictor of recidivism among reentering persons (Hakansson & Berglund, 2012). Finding effective approaches to screening, assessing, and treating currently incarcerated and reentering persons with drug and alcohol problems—and their partners—could help mitigate family distress.
- **Intimate partner violence needs to be addressed.** The high proportion of couples reporting physical and emotional abuse within their relationships prior to incarceration (40 percent of women and 45 percent of men reported experiencing physical abuse from their partners, and 46 percent of women and 38 percent of men reported perpetrating physical abuse against their partners, prior to incarceration), coupled with widespread intentions to continue the relationship after the man's release, suggests the need for intervention with both members of the couple.
- **Some characteristics of the population point to the need for early intervention and prevention strategies.** Many of the men (53%) were involved with the juvenile justice system, often beginning in adolescence. Additionally, education deficits and learning problems were high, particularly for men. Given the strong correlation between school failure and juvenile justice involvement, prevention and early intervention approaches are needed.

These descriptive baseline findings offer a portrait of 1,482 intimate or coparenting couples in five states that findings from subsequent waves of survey data will continue to augment. Understanding the characteristics, experiences, and aspirations of couples who have maintained their relationships through several years of incarceration will be crucial in developing programs and policies that meet the needs of similar families. The data and evaluation results will also shed light on the conceptual frameworks in the literature that link family support with desistance from crime. Although more data are needed to examine these frameworks within the MFS-IP sample, the role of the family in reducing criminal behavior clearly merits investigation. Family contact and family support alone may be less effective than family support in a policy environment that also addresses other key challenges, such as poverty and histories of criminal justice involvement.



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# Appendix A. Characteristics of Male Sample Based on Partners' Baseline Interview Status

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As described in **Chapter 1**, a total of 1,991 men who were eligible for the study completed a baseline interview; these men constitute the full baseline sample. The data presented in **Chapters 1–9** of this report reflect only the 1,482 men whose partners also completed baseline interviews, to better facilitate comparisons within couples. This appendix compares the 1,482 men whose partners completed a baseline interview to the 509 men whose partners did not, so that differences between these two groups can be understood.

We focus on several key characteristics included in **Chapters 2–4** of the main report, including

- demographics;
- criminal history;
- pre-incarceration housing, employment, and substance use;
- family characteristics;
- incarceration characteristics; and
- family contact during incarceration.

T-tests were used to detect whether average differences in means between the two male subsamples were statistically significant (at a critical alpha level of 0.05).

## How Were the Partners Recruited?

During the male's baseline interview, he was asked to identify his spouse, intimate partner, or, if he was not in an intimate relationship, his coparenting partner. To be eligible for the study, men had to have a partner who fell into one of these categories. At the end of the interview, men were asked to provide detailed contact information for the partners they identified. This contact information was then used to locate the partners and recruit them for the study.

Of the 1,991 men who completed baseline interviews, a partner baseline interview was completed for 1,482. Among the 509 partners who did not complete a baseline interview

- 15 were ineligible to be interviewed because they were under 18, did not speak English, or were physically or mentally impaired;
- five started their interviews but did not complete them;
- 118 refused the interview either directly or through someone else, and 117 were unavailable after repeated attempts;
- 197 could not be located;
- 14 had moved out of the study area, were institutionalized, or were in a facility that did not allow interviewer access; and
- 43 were not interviewed for other reasons.

### Demographic Characteristics

Basic demographic characteristics and highest educational attainment for the two subsamples are shown in **Exhibit A-1**. None of the differences shown in **Exhibit A-1** was statistically significant, indicating that men whose partners did not complete the baseline interview were similar to those whose partners completed an interview in age, race/ethnicity, and highest educational attainment.

**Exhibit A-1. Age, Race/Ethnicity, and Education**

	Men with Partner Baseline	Men without Partner Baseline
Age (mean)	33.5 years	33.7 years
Ethnic and racial background		
White, non-Hispanic	27%	23%
Black, non-Hispanic	57%	57%
Other, non-Hispanic	2%	3%
Hispanic (all races)	9%	11%
Multiracial	5%	6%
Highest educational attainment		
Less than H.S.	33%	32%
GED	25%	28%
High school diploma	11%	13%
Vocational	4%	3%
Some college	17%	15%
Advanced degree	10%	10%

Notes: "Other" races include American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, Asian, or "some other race." Of respondents classified as multiracial, most were Black and American Indian, White and American Indian, or Black and White.

### Criminal History

Core measures of criminal history are shown in **Exhibit A-2**. Overall, the two subsamples had similar criminal backgrounds. The only statistically significant difference between the two groups was the likelihood of any juvenile incarceration. Specifically, men whose partners completed the baseline interview were more likely to have been incarcerated as juveniles than men whose partners did not complete a baseline interview ( $p < 0.05$ ).

**Exhibit A-2. Criminal History**

	<b>Men with Partner Baseline</b>	<b>Men without Partner Baseline</b>
Number of arrests (mean)	12.1	11.6
Number of previous adult incarcerations (mean)	5.7	5.2
Number of convictions (mean)	5.1	5.1
<b>Any juvenile incarceration*</b>	53%	48%
(if yes) Number of juvenile incarcerations (mean)	3.6	3.6
Age at first arrest (mean)	16.9	16.8

Note: \* =  $p < 0.05$ , \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ , and \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$  for t-test of differences between men with and without partners who completed a baseline interview.

*Pre-Incarceration Housing, Employment, and Substance Use*

Men's housing and employment experiences during the six months prior to the incarceration are shown in **Exhibit A-3**. Once again, the two subsamples had similar pre-incarceration housing and employment situations. The only statistically significant difference was that men whose partners did not complete a baseline interview were more likely than men whose partners completed a baseline interview to have worked at a job that provided fully paid leave ( $p < 0.05$ ).

**Exhibit A-3. Housing and Employment Six Months before Incarceration**

	<b>Men with Partner Baseline</b>	<b>Men without Partner Baseline</b>
Primary housing situation before incarceration		
Living in own house/apartment	49%	44%
Living in someone else's house/apartment	46%	49%
Homeless	1%	1%
In a transitional/halfway house	1%	1%
Residential treatment	1%	1%
Employed prior to incarceration	61%	62%
Most recent job was full time	74%	74%
Most recent job provided formal pay	74%	73%
Monthly earnings for most recent job (mean)	\$1,907	\$1,979
Most recent job provided health insurance coverage	35%	38%
<b>Most recent job provided fully paid leave*</b>	32%	38%

Note: \* =  $p < 0.05$ , \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ , and \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$  for t-test of differences between men with and without partners who completed a baseline interview.



Pre-incarceration substance use is shown in **Exhibit A-4**. The two subsamples were equally likely to have reported binge drinking prior to incarceration and to have used any illicit drugs. However, the fairly small differences in using hallucinogens and heroin among the subsamples were statistically significant. Specifically, men whose partners did not complete a baseline interview were less likely to have used hallucinogens and more likely to have used heroin than men whose partners completed the baseline ( $p$  for both differences  $< 0.05$ ).

**Exhibit A-4. Pre-Incarceration Substance Use**

	Men with Partner Baseline	Men without Partner Baseline
Reported binge drinking	63%	60%
Reported use of at least one illicit drug	71%	67%
Any use of		
Marijuana	60%	57%
Powder cocaine	20%	17%
Prescription drug (abuse)	18%	17%
Crack cocaine	15%	12%
<b>Hallucinogens*</b>	13%	10%
Methamphetamine	8%	6%
<b>Heroin*</b>	7%	9%
Methadone	4%	5%
Amphetamines	4%	3%

Note: \* =  $p < 0.05$ , \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ , and \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$  for t-test of differences between men with and without partners who completed a baseline interview.

### *Family Characteristics*

Key characteristics about the relationships with the men's survey partners are shown in **Exhibit A-5**. Several significant differences between the two male subsamples are evident from the exhibit. Differences in the ways the relationships were characterized by the men (married vs. intimate vs. coparenting only) were statistically significant ( $p < 0.001$ ). Finally, men with partners who completed a baseline interview rated their current relationship happiness significantly higher than men with partners who did not complete a baseline interview ( $p < 0.05$ ).

**Exhibit A-5. Intimate Relationship Characteristics**

	<b>Men with Partner Baseline</b>	<b>Men without Partner Baseline</b>
<b>Relationship status***</b>		
Married	26%	24%
In a nonmarried intimate relationship	69%	65%
In a coparenting relationship only	5%	11%
No other partners beside study partner	86%	86%
Never cheated in current relationship	42%	45%
Duration of relationship	7.7 years	7.8 years
Relationship existed prior to incarceration	84%	82%
Lived together prior to incarceration	63%	60%
Shared income prior to incarceration	68%	64%
Intimate partner violence prior to incarceration		
Any physical abuse		
Perpetration	38%	32%
Victimization	45%	41%
Any emotional abuse		
Perpetration	34%	33%
Victimization	34%	36%
Severe physical or sexual abuse		
Perpetration	9%	8%
Victimization	10%	12%
Frequent emotional abuse		
Perpetration	10%	9%
Victimization	13%	15%
Frequent physical abuse		
Perpetration	6%	5%
Victimization	14%	13%
<b>Current relationship happiness (0–9)**</b>	7.3	6.9

Note: \* =  $p < 0.05$ , \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ , and \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$  for t-test of differences between men with and without partners who completed a baseline interview.

Parenting, coparenting, and child characteristics for the two subsamples of men are shown in **Exhibit A-6**. Once again, several differences between the subsamples were statistically significant. Men whose partners did not complete a baseline interview had significantly fewer children, on average, and fewer children of both sexes than men whose partners completed their baseline interview. Men whose partners failed to complete a baseline interview were significantly less likely than men whose partners completed a baseline interview to report that at least one of their children did not live with them and that they had at least one child they did not financially support during

the six months prior to their incarceration. However, this was likely due to the fact that these men had fewer children.

#### Exhibit A-6. Parenting/Child Characteristics

	Men with Partner Baseline	Men without Partner Baseline
Has children under 18	87%	84%
<b>Number of children (mean)***</b>	3.1	2.6
<b>Number of male children (mean)*</b>	1.5	1.4
<b>Number of female children (mean)***</b>	1.6	1.3
Average age of children	8.0 years	8.0 years
Coparenting any children with study partner	88%	85%
Lived with any children before incarceration	68%	66%
<b>Had any children who did not live with him**</b>	62%	54%
Provided some financial support for children prior to incarceration	91%	90%
<b>Had at least one child they did not financially support*</b>	33%	27%
Required to pay child support for at least one child	35%	30%

Note: \* =  $p < 0.05$ , \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ , and \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$  for t-test of differences between men with and without partners who completed a baseline interview.

#### *Incarceration Characteristics*

Characteristics of the offenses for which male sample members were currently incarcerated are shown in **Exhibit A-7**. Although the offense that led to the current incarceration did not differ significantly between the two subsamples, men whose partners did not complete a baseline interview had been incarcerated for significantly longer at the time of the baseline interview than men whose partners did complete a baseline interview. Perhaps related to the longer overall duration of incarceration, these men also reported receiving significantly more disciplinary infractions and days in administrative segregation and had been transferred more times.

**Exhibit A-7. Incarceration Characteristics**

	<b>Men with Partner Baseline</b>	<b>Men without Partner Baseline</b>
Offense type for current incarceration		
Technical violation	14%	14%
Person	43%	43%
Property	18%	18%
Drug	31%	30%
Public order	24%	23%
Other	1%	2%
<b>Time served to date (mean)**</b>	3.4 years	4.1 years
Expected total duration of incarceration (mean time served to date + remaining time)	6.5 years	6.6 years
<b>Number of disciplinary infractions (mean)*</b>	2.9	3.7
<b>Administrative segregation (mean)*</b>	47 days	68 days
<b>Number of transfers (mean)***</b>	2.0	2.5
Expect to be released from incarceration	99%	99%
Partner is incarcerated	2%	2%

Note: \* =  $p < 0.05$ , \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ , and \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$  for t-test of differences between men with and without partners who completed a baseline interview.

*Family Contact during Incarceration*

The frequency of contact between men and their study partners is shown in **Exhibit A-8**. For both in-person and telephone contact, the differences in frequency of contact between the two subsamples were statistically significant. The most notable differences were observed in the proportions of men who reported “never” having in-person contact with their partners; whereas 21 percent of men whose partners completed a baseline interview reported no in-person contact, 36 percent of men whose partners did not complete a baseline interview reported no in-person contact. A similar pattern is evident for phone contact.

**Exhibit A-8. In-Prison Contact between Men and Study Partners**

	Men with Partner Baseline	Men without Partner Baseline
<b>In-Person contact***</b>		
Weekly or more	24%	18%
Biweekly	27%	20%
Once a month	12%	10%
Every two months	10%	8%
Only a couple of times	6%	9%
Never	21%	36%
<b>Phone contact**</b>		
Weekly or more	56%	49%
Biweekly	12%	12%
Once a month	6%	6%
Every two months	4%	4%
Only a couple of times	5%	6%
Never	16%	24%

Note: \*= p < 0.05, \*\*= p < 0.01, and \*\*\*= p < 0.001 for t-test of differences between men with and without partners who completed a baseline interview.

The frequency of contact between men and their children is shown in **Exhibit A-9**. Similar to the pattern observed for contact with their survey partners, men whose partners did not complete a baseline interview were also significantly less likely to report having several forms of contact with focal children during their incarceration. Specifically, men whose partners did not complete a baseline interview were less likely to report talking on the telephone with, sending mail to, receiving personal visits from, and receiving audiotapes or photos from the focal children during their incarceration.

**Exhibit A-9. In-Prison Contact between Men and Children**

	Men with Partner Baseline	Men without Partner Baseline
Type of contact between father and child		
<b>Talk on phone**</b>	70%	63%
<b>Father sends mail*</b>	81%	76%
Father receives mail	60%	58%
<b>Father receives personal visits**</b>	56%	47%
<b>Father receives audiotapes/photos*</b>	90%	86%
Father sends audiotapes	9%	6%

Note: \*= p < 0.05, \*\*= p < 0.01, and \*\*\*= p < 0.001 for t-test of differences between men with and without partners who completed a baseline interview.

### *Summary*

Several differences existed between men whose partners completed a baseline interview and those whose partners did not. Although the subsamples were very comparable in terms of basic demographic characteristics, criminal history, and pre-incarceration experiences, men whose partners did not complete a baseline interview were incarcerated for a significantly longer period of time.

Some of the differences observed between the two subsamples pertained to the men's relationships with their survey partners and children. Men whose partners did not complete a baseline interview differed from those whose partners did complete a baseline interview in both how they characterized their relationship—with greater proportions of the former group characterizing it as coparenting (vs. married or intimate)—and their overall happiness with the relationship. Further, men whose partners did not complete a baseline interview had fewer children.

The two samples also differed significantly on several dimensions of in-prison contact between the men and their families. Men whose partners did not complete a baseline interview had significantly less frequent in-person and telephone contact with their partners than their counterparts whose partners did complete a baseline interview. Similarly, they were less likely to report most types of contact with the focal children than men whose partners completed a baseline interview.

The differences observed between the two subsamples are not surprising. For a partner to be successfully interviewed at baseline, she needed to 1) be located by the field interviewers using the contact information provided by the male partner and 2) agree to participate in an interview knowing that the questions would focus on her relationship with the man who had identified her as his partner. Clearly, several of the differences documented in this appendix are logically related to the chances of a partner being located and/or agreeing to participate in the interview. For example, men who had been incarcerated longer may not have had up-to-date contact information for their partners, particularly for tenuous relationships in which the partner did not notify the man about changes in her living situation. Similarly, men who did not talk on the telephone with their partners or receive personal visits from them may not have had up-to-date phone numbers, addresses, or other contact information for them. Even for partners who were successfully located by the field interviewers and asked to participate in the study, it is very likely that the same reasons that kept a woman from visiting or talking with her incarcerated partner would also make her reluctant to participate in an interview that focused on her relationship with him. The association between the strength of the relationship and the likelihood of a woman agreeing to participate in the interview is also supported by the finding that men's self-reported happiness with the couple's relationship was lower among men whose partners did not complete a baseline interview. Women in more strained relationships—at least from

the man's perspective—may have been more hesitant to participate in a study that was focused on the couple's relationship.

# Appendix B. Site-Specific Data Tables

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As discussed in **Chapter 1**, the MFS-IP evaluation sample includes couples from five sites. **Exhibit B-1** shows the distribution of the study couples across the sites.

**Exhibit B-1. Distribution of Study Sample by Site**

	Number of Couples	Percentage of Total Sample
Indiana (IN)	577	39%
Ohio (OH)	527	36%
New Jersey (NJ)	180	12%
New York (NY)	126	9%
Minnesota (MN)	72	5%

To better understand variation among the sample, this appendix presents site-level descriptive statistics for key variables discussed in **Chapters 2–8**. Because of the descriptive nature of this analysis, significance tests for site differences were not conducted.

## *Characteristics of MFS-IP Families*

### **Demographics and Background Characteristics**

Demographic characteristics by site are shown in **Exhibit B-2**. These data suggest several differences by site. On average, OH and MN sample members are younger than the cross-site mean, and the NY sample is older. Although the female samples in IN, OH, and MN appear younger than the male samples in those states (consistent with the findings for the combined sample), this does not appear to be the case in NY or NJ.

The NY sample has the highest proportion of married couples (and lowest proportion of couples in non-married intimate relationships) of all the sites, and MN has the lowest. In addition, both NJ and OH have lower proportions of married couples than the average across sites, with IN close to the average. In general, sites with a lower-than-average proportion of married couples have a higher-than-average proportion of couples in non-married intimate relationships. Consistent with the pattern for the total sample, lower proportions of women than men in all sites characterized the relationships as intimate, and higher proportions characterized them as coparenting only.



**Exhibit B-2. Demographic Characteristics by Site, for Men and Women**

	Total Sample		IN		OH		NY		NJ		MN	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Age (mean)	33.5 years	32.4 years	34.3 years	32.6 years	31.8 years	30.6 years	36.8 years	36.9 years	34.3 years	34.4 years	32.1 years	30.9 years
Relationship status												
Married	26%	25%	25%	24%	22%	22%	56%	55%	21%	19%	15%	18%
Nonmarried intimate relationship	69%	61%	72%	64%	70%	59%	40%	37%	74%	68%	85%	72%
In a coparenting relationship only	5%	14%	4%	13%	8%	19%	4%	8%	6%	12%	0%	10%
Has children under 18	87%	81%	83%	76%	92%	87%	75%	70%	90%	81%	97%	92%
Number of children (mean)	3.1	2.4	3.2	2.4	3.2	2.5	2.5	2.1	2.6	2.1	3.4	3.0
Average age of children	8.0 years	7.6 years	8.1 years	7.7 years	7.8 years	7.3 years	8.9 years	8.1 years	8.2 years	7.9 years	7.0 years	6.8 years
Race/ethnicity												
White, non-Hispanic	27%	38%	43%	54%	22%	32%	10%	20%	8%	15%	15%	33%
Black, non-Hispanic	57%	48%	47%	37%	60%	53%	62%	54%	73%	66%	65%	47%
Other, non-Hispanic	2%	2%	1%	1%	2%	2%	1%	6%	2%	2%	10%	7%
Hispanic (all races)	9%	7%	5%	3%	10%	7%	22%	19%	15%	16%	7%	4%
Multiracial	5%	5%	4%	4%	7%	7%	5%	1%	2%	2%	3%	8%
Born outside of U.S.	3%	3%	2%	1%	2%	2%	13%	18%	7%	4%	1%	6%

(continued)

**Exhibit B-2. Demographic Characteristics by Site, for Men and Women (continued)**

	Total Sample		IN		OH		NY		NJ		MN	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Highest educational attainment												
Less than H.S.	33%	24%	27%	24%	41%	27%	19%	18%	40%	24%	35%	19%
GED	25%	8%	20%	9%	28%	7%	30%	6%	26%	4%	35%	11%
H.S. diploma	11%	22%	9%	23%	11%	19%	7%	15%	23%	28%	15%	21%
Vocational	4%	6%	6%	5%	2%	7%	2%	7%	2%	7%	4%	10%
Some college	17%	29%	21%	29%	15%	29%	25%	33%	9%	25%	7%	29%
Advanced degree	10%	12%	17%	11%	4%	11%	17%	21%	1%	11%	4%	10%
Learning problems score	6.0	4.8	5.9	4.9	6.4	5.0	5.1	4.2	6.0	4.3	6.0	5.3
Ever repeated grade	42%	23%	37%	22%	50%	27%	35%	22%	48%	22%	29%	14%
Ever been suspended/expelled	81%	47%	77%	44%	86%	54%	72%	30%	85%	46%	85%	62%
ADHD scale	3.9	4.1	3.9	4.1	4.3	4.3	3.4	4.0	3.5	3.7	4.1	4.3
Goal orientation scale	5.0	4.7	4.9	4.6	4.9	4.8	5.4	4.9	4.9	4.9	5.0	4.8
Self-efficacy scale	6.0	5.8	6.0	5.7	5.8	5.8	6.1	5.8	6.6	6.2	5.8	5.6

With regard to parenting status, the MN sample had the highest proportion of parents (and, among parents, the highest number of children, on average) and NY the lowest. Consistent with the pattern for the total sample, lower proportions of women than men had children under 18, and the average number of children was lower for women than men in all states. Not surprisingly, given the average age of sample members, the average age of the children was slightly younger for sample members in OH and MN and older for those in NY.

IN contributed the largest proportion of White sample members and NJ, which had the highest proportion of Black sample members, the lowest. NY and MN also had fewer White sample members than the cross-site average. NY contributed the highest proportion of Hispanic sample members and had the highest proportion of respondents born outside of the United States.

The data suggest a few differences in educational attainment. On average, the NY sample members had the highest level of education (as well as the lowest mean learning problems score and the lowest proportion of sample members who were ever suspended or expelled) and the OH and NJ samples the lowest. The limited variation in ADHD, goal orientation, and self-efficacy makes it difficult to draw conclusions about site-level differences.

### **Criminal History**

Men's criminal history is shown in **Exhibit B-3**, with women's shown in **Exhibit B-4**. The data suggest several differences from the cross-site average. The male sample from MN is far more criminally involved than the samples from the other sites, followed by OH. MN and OH sample members have more prior arrests, adult incarcerations, and convictions than do those from other sites. In addition, they had the youngest age at first arrest, and, among those with any juvenile incarceration, more juvenile incarcerations than those from other sites. Men from the NY sample had the least criminal involvement, based on these data. The IN sample also appears to have less extensive criminal histories than the cross-site average on several dimensions.

For women's criminal involvement, the samples in NY and NJ have the least, and the MN sample the most extensive criminal histories.

### **Men's Pre-Incarceration Characteristics**

Information about men's pre-incarceration employment, by site, is shown in **Exhibit B-5**. None of the sites reflected the cross-site average with regard to the percentage of men employed prior to incarceration. The MN and OH samples had far lower levels of pre-incarceration employment than the other sites, and the men who were working were less likely to have full-time employment. No large differences in job quality (e.g., likelihood of the job providing health insurance or fully paid leave) were evident across sites, and the average monthly earnings were comparable.

**Exhibit B-3. Men's Criminal History, by Site**

	Total Sample	IN	OH	NY	NJ	MN
Number of arrests (mean)	12.1	10.3	13.7	8.1	13.4	18.1
Number of previous adult incarcerations (mean)	5.7	5.4	6.2	3.9	5.3	8.5
Number of convictions (mean)	5.1	4.8	5.6	3.5	5.4	6.5
Any juvenile incarceration	53%	47%	63%	27%	58%	55%
(if yes) Number of juvenile incarcerations (mean)	3.6	3.6	3.9	1.7	2.9	4.0
Age at first arrest (mean)	16.9	17.6	15.9	18.5	16.9	16.3

**Exhibit B-4. Women's Criminal History, by Site**

	Total Sample	IN	OH	NY	NJ	MN
Ever been arrested	47%	48%	48%	39%	39%	61%
Ever been incarcerated	28%	30%	29%	18%	22%	42%
Incarcerated at baseline interview	1%	1%	2%	0%	0%	0%
Number of arrests (mean)	1.4	1.3	1.6	1.0	1.0	2.0
Number of convictions (mean)	0.7	0.7	0.9	0.3	0.4	0.9

**Exhibit B-5. Men's Pre-Incarceration Employment, by Site**

	Total Sample	IN	OH	NY	NJ	MN
Employed prior to incarceration	61%	68%	51%	71%	66%	44%
If employed...						
Job was full time	74%	81%	63%	81%	74%	71%
Job provided formal pay	74%	79%	69%	72%	74%	72%
Monthly earnings (mean)	\$1,907	\$1,963	\$1,873	\$1,943	\$1,853	\$1,702
Job provided health insurance coverage	35%	42%	29%	35%	27%	33%
Job provided fully paid leave	32%	36%	28%	39%	31%	23%

With regard to pre-incarceration substance use (shown in **Exhibit B-6**), reports of using any illicit drug and binge drinking prior to the incarceration were comparable in the IN, OH, and MN samples. Drug use and binge drinking prior to the incarceration were less likely to be reported among the NY and NJ sample members. This pattern persisted for several specific drug types, with the highest rates in IN, followed by OH, and lowest in NY and NJ. The MN sample had high reported use (and comparable to the IN sample) of crack cocaine, methamphetamine, and other amphetamines, whereas the NJ sample had a relatively high share of reported heroin use.

#### **Exhibit B-6. Men's Pre-Incarceration Substance Use, by Site**

	<b>Total Sample</b>	<b>IN</b>	<b>OH</b>	<b>NY</b>	<b>NJ</b>	<b>MN</b>
Used at least one illicit drug	71%	74%	73%	61%	63%	73%
Any binge drinking	63%	68%	67%	37%	49%	65%
Any marijuana use	60%	58%	66%	52%	50%	60%
Any powder cocaine use	20%	24%	20%	15%	12%	11%
Any prescription drug abuse	18%	25%	19%	7%	7%	9%
Any crack cocaine use	15%	19%	13%	9%	14%	17%
Any hallucinogen use	13%	17%	13%	8%	8%	9%
Any methamphetamine use	8%	16%	3%	0%	1%	11%
Any heroin use	7%	5%	5%	9%	15%	6%
Any methadone use	4%	6%	2%	4%	2%	1%
Any amphetamine use	4%	7%	1%	1%	1%	7%

#### **Men's Incarceration Characteristics**

Site-specific incarceration characteristics for the male sample are shown in **Exhibit B-7**. With regard to the offense type associated with the men's current incarceration, men in the MN and NJ samples are disproportionately more likely to be incarcerated for a technical violation. The likelihood of being incarcerated for a technical violation is far lower in OH and NY, where sample members are disproportionately more likely to be incarcerated for a person offense. Notably, person offenses are the most commonly reported offense type in all states except IN. Drug offenses were disproportionately high in IN (and disproportionately low in MN), which may be related to IN sample members' high pre-incarceration substance use (discussed above).

**Exhibit B-7. Men's Incarceration Characteristics, by Site**

	<b>Total Sample</b>	<b>IN</b>	<b>OH</b>	<b>NY</b>	<b>NJ</b>	<b>MN</b>
Offense type for current incarceration						
Technical violation	14%	14%	9%	6%	28%	29%
Person	43%	34%	52%	62%	35%	31%
Property	18%	16%	21%	15%	16%	19%
Drug	31%	38%	28%	19%	33%	13%
Public order	24%	17%	30%	19%	26%	28%
Other	1%	1%	2%	0%	0%	0%
Time served to date (mean)	3.4 years	3.1 years	3.2 years	7.5 years	3.0 years	1.0 year
Expected total duration of incarceration (mean)	6.5 years	6.8 years	7.0 years	10.8 years	3.4 years	2.1 years
Number of disciplinary infractions (mean)	2.9	2.0	4.0	5.1	2.0	0.8
Days in administrative segregation (mean)	47 days	33 days	48 days	79 days	85 days	3 days
Number of transfers (mean)	2.0	1.8	1.9	3.6	2.3	1.7
Expect to be released	99%	100%	98%	99%	100%	100%

Very large variation exists across sites in the reported time served to date, with the NY sample having served longer sentences as of the baseline interview than the other sites, and the MN sample having served the shortest. Part of this variability is likely due to offense type; 62 percent of the NY sample was incarcerated for a person offense and 29 percent of the MN sample was incarcerated for a technical violation. However, this is also attributable to the MFS-IP programs' eligibility criteria. The MN program specifically targeted individuals upon intake to the MN Department of Corrections, whereas the NY program did not use intake (or release) date as an eligibility criterion. When looking at total expected duration of incarceration, which is based on respondents' reports of their anticipated release dates, the same contrast between the NY and MN samples exists, with NJ also emerging as an outlier. As with MN, the shorter overall term of incarceration for the NJ sample may be partially attributable to the disproportionately high share of NJ men incarcerated for technical violations. The NJ sample had the least amount of time remaining on their sentences after their baseline interview because the MFS-IP program in NJ enrolled men approximately six months prior to their release, which was replicated in comparison group selection.

The variation in duration of incarceration likely explains site variation in the number of disciplinary infractions, days in administrative segregation, and number of transfers.

## *Couple Relationships*

### **Relationship History**

**Exhibit B-8** shows site-specific frequencies for relationship duration, exclusivity, and pre-incarceration relationship status. Modest site differences in these indicators existed, and women's and men's reports for each site tended to vary in the same direction from the mean.

The NY and NJ samples reported longer relationships than the cross-site average, but lower proportions shared an income before the incarceration (and in NY, a lower proportion lived together before the incarceration). In contrast, MN respondents reported shorter and less exclusive relationships than the sample as a whole, but they more often lived together and shared an income prior to the current incarceration. The characteristics of the male and female samples in IN and OH resembled the cross-site average. OH couples appeared somewhat less exclusive, whereas IN couples appeared somewhat more exclusive and more likely to share an income than the sample as a whole.

### **Relationship Quality and Challenges**

Site-specific measures of relationship quality and challenges are shown in **Exhibit B-9**. Respondents in NY reported lower-than-average rates of victimization and perpetration for almost all intimate partner violence measures, whereas those in IN were close to the cross-site average for these measures. OH men's and women's reports of any physical and any emotional abuse victimization were higher than the cross-site average. In addition, rates of severe male-on-female abuse were higher in OH than in the cross-site sample (with men reporting higher rates of severe abuse perpetration and women reporting higher rates of severe abuse victimization).

**Exhibit B-8. Relationship Characteristics, by Site**

	Total Sample		IN		OH		NY		NJ		MN	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Length of relationship (mean)	7.7 years	7.0 years	7.5 years	6.6 years	7.6 years	6.9 years	9.0 years	9.2 years	8.9 years	7.9 years	6.0 years	5.4 years
Have no other romantic partners	86%	82%	93%	90%	78%	73%	95%	86%	93%	79%	56%	78%
Relationship existed prior to incarceration	83%	81%	83%	78%	87%	87%	63%	66%	85%	80%	92%	90%
Lived with partner prior to incarceration	63%	59%	65%	61%	65%	61%	45%	41%	61%	57%	76%	69%
Shared income prior to incarceration	68%	55%	72%	60%	66%	52%	63%	48%	63%	54%	73%	58%



**Exhibit B-9. Intimate Partner Violence, by Site**

	Total Sample		IN		OH		NY		NJ		MN	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Any physical abuse												
Perpetration	38%	46%	36%	43%	44%	47%	13%	36%	36%	54%	41%	55%
Victimization	45%	40%	42%	36%	50%	45%	29%	25%	45%	42%	48%	39%
Any emotional abuse												
Perpetration	34%	33%	34%	30%	38%	36%	18%	15%	29%	40%	33%	42%
Victimization	34%	36%	31%	35%	38%	40%	28%	25%	34%	39%	26%	36%
Severe physical or sexual abuse												
Perpetration	9%	6%	8%	5%	13%	7%	3%	2%	7%	10%	8%	6%
Victimization	10%	17%	7%	14%	13%	22%	13%	8%	13%	14%	11%	19%
Frequent emotional abuse												
Perpetration	10%	12%	10%	11%	13%	14%	5%	5%	5%	12%	3%	8%
Victimization	13%	17%	13%	19%	14%	18%	15%	15%	12%	13%	5%	17%
Frequent physical abuse												
Perpetration	6%	10%	5%	9%	9%	10%	0%	6%	5%	17%	3%	11%
Victimization	14%	13%	11%	13%	15%	15%	18%	6%	20%	15%	8%	11%
Relationship happiness (scale 0-9)	7.3	6.7	7.4	6.8	6.8	6.3	8.1	7.3	7.9	6.7	7.4	6.9
Fidelity (never had sexual/romantic contact with anyone else)	42%	65%	43%	69%	34%	56%	64%	79%	44%	68%	41%	72%

The NJ and MN samples had different gender patterns in men's and women's intimate partner violence reports compared to the cross-site sample. Compared to the cross-site average, NJ and MN women reported higher frequencies of any physical abuse and any emotional abuse perpetration. Men in MN reported lower rates of both victimization and perpetration for the frequent physical and emotional abuse measures. NJ respondents reported somewhat more female-on-male abuse and somewhat less male-on-female abuse than the sample as a whole. (NJ men reported lower-than-average rates of frequent emotional abuse perpetration and higher-than-average rates of frequent physical abuse victimization; NJ women reported lower-than-average frequent emotional abuse victimization and higher-than-average frequent physical abuse perpetration.)

Relationship quality reports in IN, NJ, and MN all resembled the cross-site mean. OH respondents were less happy in their relationships than the full sample, whereas men and women in NY expressed higher-than-average relationship happiness. Site-specific patterns for fidelity followed those for overall relationship happiness; men and women in the OH sample reported lower rates of fidelity to their study partners, whereas NY men and women reported higher-than-average fidelity.

### **Relationship Experiences during Incarceration**

Men's reported frequency of in-person contact during the incarceration varied widely by site, as shown in **Exhibit B-10**. Compared to the cross-site average, lower proportions of IN and NY men and a notably higher proportion of MN men reported never seeing their partners during the current incarceration. However, in NY and MN, these differences could be an artifact of how long men were in prison to date (as MN men had been incarcerated for a shorter time and NY men for a longer time than the sample as a whole). Reports of very frequent in-person contact (weekly or more) were most common in NJ.

**Exhibit B-10** also shows frequencies of telephone contact, with less variation by site evident than for in-person contact. Men in most sites reported similar patterns of phone contact as those seen in the cross-site sample. Compared to the full sample, a higher proportion of MN men reported weekly phone calls with their partners, and a lower-than-average proportion reported never having phone contact with their partners.

Barriers to contact during the male partner's incarceration are shown in **Exhibit B-11**. Compared to the cross-site average, a higher proportion of MN respondents viewed the prison location as a barrier. Lower proportions of MN and NY respondents characterized the cost of telephone calling as a barrier, whereas IN respondents reported it more often. The cost of visiting was a commonly reported barrier for NY couples, whereas the perceived unpleasantness of the prison setting was more commonly reported in the NJ sample.

Men's and women's perceptions of the impact of the incarceration on their relationships are also shown in **Exhibit B-11**. Site variation on this item is limited; however, respondents in the sites where men had served the longest (NY) and shortest (MN) incarceration terms at the time

of the interview were more likely to report no change in their partner relationships as a result of the incarceration.

**Exhibit B-10. Male Report of Contact with Partner, by Site**

	Total Sample	IN	OH	NY	NJ	MN
Frequency of in-person contact with partner						
Never	21%	15%	25%	9%	27%	54%
Only a couple of times	6%	6%	7%	6%	4%	4%
Every 2 months	10%	10%	10%	20%	5%	3%
Once/month	12%	13%	10%	22%	10%	7%
Biweekly	27%	33%	27%	23%	15%	14%
Weekly or more	24%	23%	22%	21%	39%	18%
Frequency of phone contact with partner						
Never	16%	21%	13%	12%	18%	6%
Only a couple of times	5%	5%	6%	5%	4%	7%
Every 2 months	4%	4%	5%	3%	3%	6%
Once/month	6%	6%	5%	6%	7%	6%
Biweekly	12%	11%	15%	9%	15%	6%
Weekly or more	56%	53%	55%	65%	54%	76%

**Exhibit B-11. Barriers to Partner Contact and Perceived Impact of Incarceration, by Site (%)**

	Total Sample		IN		OH		NY		NJ		MN	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Barriers to contact with partner												
The prison is located too far away	40%	44%	39%	41%	38%	46%	41%	39%	39%	46%	60%	61%
The cost of phone calls is too high	37%	35%	46%	45%	35%	35%	15%	15%	34%	28%	17%	17%
The cost of visiting is too high	28%	25%	27%	22%	30%	25%	40%	41%	20%	21%	25%	24%
The prison is not a pleasant place to visit	28%	40%	25%	40%	27%	38%	21%	41%	45%	45%	28%	44%
Perceived impact of incarceration on relationship												
Made you closer	65%	55%	69%	58%	59%	52%	67%	54%	70%	54%	59%	56%
Made you drift apart	22%	29%	19%	29%	29%	32%	17%	26%	15%	27%	22%	19%
No change	13%	16%	12%	13%	12%	15%	17%	21%	14%	19%	19%	25%

## *Parenting and Coparenting*

### **Parenting Status and Characteristics**

**Exhibit B-12** shows child and coparenting characteristics by site. As noted earlier, the children of NY respondents are slightly older than the cross-site average, whereas MN children are slightly younger than average (paralleling site differences in the age of respondents themselves).

### **Parenting before Incarceration**

In general, site-specific frequencies for coparenting characteristics were similar to the cross-site averages. Gender differences in the average number of coparenting partners that existed in the cross-site totals (i.e., with women tending to have fewer coparenting partners than men) were less striking within the NY and NJ samples.

Men's reports of pre-incarceration child contact and child support by site are shown in **Exhibit B-13**. It appears that, compared to the full sample, lower proportions of men in NY, NJ, and MN had lived with any of their children prior to the incarceration. NY and NJ men were also less likely than the average sample member to have nonresidential children, whereas MN men were somewhat more likely. (These differences are potentially related to the higher overall number of children among the MN sample.)

Across sites, similar proportions of men provided financial support for a child prior to the current incarceration. Compared to the cross-site sample, a somewhat smaller proportion of MN men reported providing any financial support for a child, although a higher proportion of MN men reported having formal child support orders. The proportion of NY men with formal child support orders was lower, and fewer owed back child support than among the sample as a whole. Regarding modification of child support orders during incarceration, a higher proportion of NJ and MN men indicated receiving a modification than did men in the full sample.

### **Quality of Current Parent-Child Relationships**

**Exhibit B-14** presents site-specific reports of parenting behavior and parent-child relationship quality. Parental warmth reports among IN and OH respondents resembled those of the sample as a whole. Regarding physical affection specifically, higher proportions of NY, NJ, and MN men than men in the full sample reported always demonstrating this behavior with their children. With regard to verbal warmth, however (such as saying "I love you," praising a child, or talking with a child about his or her interests), a lower proportion of MN respondents reported always engaging in these behaviors compared to the cross-site sample.

**Exhibit B-12. Child and Coparenting Characteristics, by Site**

	Total Sample		IN		OH		NY		NJ		MN	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Characteristics of children parented												
Average age of children	8.0 years	7.6 years	8.1 years	7.7 years	7.8 years	7.3 years	8.9 years	8.1 years	8.2 years	7.9 years	7.0 years	6.8 years
Coparenting characteristics												
Average number of coparenting partners	2.8	1.9	3.0	1.6	3.2	2.4	1.7	1.4	1.9	1.4	3.1	2.5
Coparenting any children with study partner	88%	89%	87%	86%	91%	92%	86%	89%	89%	89%	84%	96%
Average number of children coparented	2.0	2.0	2.1	1.9	2.2	2.1	1.7	1.7	1.8	1.7	2.2	2.5

**Exhibit B-13. Male Report of Pre-Incarceration Contact and Child Support, by Site**

	<b>Total Sample</b>	<b>IN</b>	<b>OH</b>	<b>NY</b>	<b>NJ</b>	<b>MN</b>
Pre-incarceration contact						
Lived with any children	68%	71%	71%	53%	61%	61%
Had at least one nonresidential child	62%	62%	64%	50%	58%	71%
Provided financial support for at least one child	91%	91%	91%	92%	93%	84%
Child support orders						
Have any formal child support order	35%	39%	36%	16%	28%	41%
Average number of children for whom child support orders exist	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.8	1.6	2.1
Order status during incarceration						
Owe back child support	89%	90%	90%	73%	93%	83%
Order modified during incarceration	38%	38%	32%	36%	48%	50%

**Exhibit B-14. Male and Female Reports of Parenting Characteristics, by Site**

	Total Sample		IN		OH		NY		NJ		MN	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Parental warmth												
Hug or show physical affection (“always”)	96%	82%	96%	81%	93%	83%	99%	87%	100%	83%	100%	71%
Tell child you love him/her (“always”)	94%	91%	94%	94%	94%	91%	92%	91%	97%	88%	88%	92%
Communicate with child about child’s interests (“always”)	79%	74%	83%	74%	75%	74%	87%	79%	80%	77%	68%	69%
Praise child (“always”)	85%	79%	87%	79%	83%	79%	85%	81%	90%	77%	77%	73%
Ratings of respondent’s relationship with focal child												
“Excellent” relationship with child	27%	62%	24%	65%	24%	60%	45%	63%	36%	67%	24%	56%
“Excellent” rating as parent	15%	35%	12%	30%	15%	37%	17%	37%	19%	43%	12%	29%
Father’s contact with focal child												
Talk on phone	70%	75%	66%	69%	71%	76%	75%	76%	75%	81%	80%	81%
Father sends mail	81%	79%	82%	79%	82%	81%	85%	88%	79%	74%	70%	72%
Father receives mail	60%	67%	61%	71%	61%	69%	67%	66%	57%	52%	46%	58%
Father receives personal visits	56%	61%	59%	65%	57%	63%	68%	65%	53%	55%	24%	32%
Perceived impact of incarceration on father’s relationship with child												
Made them closer	36%	24%	36%	25%	36%	23%	32%	28%	40%	25%	24%	23%
Made them drift apart	26%	29%	27%	28%	26%	31%	22%	19%	22%	29%	30%	31%
No change	38%	47%	37%	47%	37%	46%	46%	53%	38%	46%	46%	47%



## Parenting Experiences during Incarceration

Site frequencies for parent-child contact and respondents' perceptions of the impact of incarceration on the parent-child relationship are also shown in **Exhibit B-14**. Site differences in parent-child visitation during the incarceration resemble those observed for in-person partner contact—that is, compared to the full sample, a lower proportion of MN respondents and a higher proportion of NY respondents reported in-person parent-child contact (again, perhaps an artifact of site differences in time served as of the baseline interview). In addition, a lower proportion of MN men than men in the full sample reported ever sending or receiving mail from their children, although they reported higher rates of telephone contact.

Compared to the full sample, men in NJ seemed more likely to feel that the incarceration made them closer to their children and less likely to feel it made them drift apart. The opposite was true among men in MN, whose assessments of the impact of incarceration on their parent-child relationships were more negative than among the cross-site sample. As with partner relationships, respondents in the sites where men had served the longest (NY) and shortest (MN) terms of incarceration at the time of the interview more often reported no change in their parent-child relationships as a result of the incarceration.

### *Extended Family Relationships*

#### Childhood Parenting Situation

Characteristics of respondents' childhood parenting situations are shown by site in **Exhibit B-15**. In general, the averages in most sites were similar to the cross-site averages. The male sample in MN appears less likely than those in other sites to have grown up in a two-parent home and to have ever lived with their biological fathers. The MN male sample was also more likely to report having other father and mother figures and had the highest proportion of men describing their childhood parenting situation as very unstable or unstable. Site differences were much less pronounced for women, but the MN female sample had the highest proportion of women who reported other father and mother figures and generally perceived their childhood family situations as the least stable.

#### Family Criminal and Substance Use History

**Exhibit B-16** shows the proportion of sample members in each site who reported that someone in their family (other than their survey partner) was ever arrested or had a problem with drugs or alcohol. Once again, the differences were modest. However, consistent with the pattern observed for respondents' own criminal involvement, the MN sample was most likely to report having a family member with a history of arrest and the NY sample was least likely to report this. Differences were much less pronounced for problematic drug or alcohol use.

**Exhibit B-15. Childhood Parenting Situation, by Site**

	Total Sample		IN		OH		NY		NJ		MN	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Grew up in two-parent home	58%	62%	63%	65%	56%	59%	60%	64%	52%	62%	51%	58%
Ever lived with biological father	59%	64%	64%	67%	55%	59%	60%	67%	57%	66%	53%	58%
Had other father figure	48%	40%	52%	39%	49%	44%	38%	33%	37%	33%	58%	47%
Ever lived with biological mother	96%	96%	96%	96%	96%	96%	96%	96%	94%	96%	96%	99%
Had other mother figure	48%	42%	47%	40%	50%	46%	42%	41%	48%	31%	61%	56%
Changes in parenting situation during childhood (mean # of times situation changed)	1.8 times	1.5 times	2.2 times	1.8 times	1.6 times	1.4 times	1.1 times	0.8 times	1.3 times	0.8 times	2.2 times	3.3 times
Perceived stability of childhood parenting situation												
Very stable	33%	43%	33%	42%	30%	42%	42%	42%	40%	55%	33%	36%
Stable	44%	40%	46%	41%	47%	42%	35%	41%	41%	33%	36%	35%
Unstable	16%	11%	16%	11%	16%	11%	18%	11%	13%	8%	24%	15%
Very unstable	6%	6%	5%	6%	8%	5%	6%	6%	6%	4%	7%	14%

**Exhibit B-16. Extended Family History of Arrest and Drug/Alcohol Problems, by Site**

	Total Sample		IN		OH		NY		NJ		MN	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Family member ever arrested	67%	77%	68%	79%	68%	79%	60%	66%	61%	67%	75%	83%
Family member had problems with drugs or alcohol	58%	65%	61%	68%	57%	67%	56%	46%	51%	60%	65%	72%

### Men's Extended Family and Peer Relationships

Men's peer influences prior to incarceration are shown in **Exhibit B-17**. Although little variation exists in the number of friends who were ever in prison, the male MN sample had the smallest share of friends who were employed and the largest share of friends who used illegal drugs. The MN sample also reported lower levels of emotional support from their extended families at the time of their baseline interviews than did the samples from other states.

**Exhibit B-17. Men's Extended Family and Peer Relationships, by Site**

	Total Sample	IN	OH	NY	NJ	MN
Peer influences prior to incarceration						
All/most friends have been in prison	20%	17%	23%	19%	18%	21%
All/most friends were employed full time	41%	46%	33%	47%	45%	31%
All/most friends used illegal drugs	37%	38%	39%	37%	21%	44%
Mean extended family support score (range 0–18; higher values indicate higher family support)	13.3	13.4	13.1	13.9	13.4	12.6

### *Women's Experiences during Their Partners' Incarcerations*

**Exhibit B-18** shows women's employment and housing characteristics during their partners' incarcerations. Fairly substantial variation exists across sites. Compared to the cross-site average, the female samples in IN and NY were more likely to be working, whereas those in OH, NJ, and MN were less likely to be currently employed. Among those who were working, the NY sample had higher average monthly earnings and was more likely to have fully paid leave than respondents in other sites. By contrast, members of the MN female sample were the least likely to receive health insurance or paid leave through their employers and had the lowest average monthly earnings across all five sites.

**Exhibit B-18. Females' Employment and Housing, by Site**

	Total Sample	IN	OH	NY	NJ	MN
Currently working	57%	65%	51%	61%	51%	49%
Among those working...						
Job is full time	69%	72%	63%	75%	75%	45%
Job provides formal pay	93%	93%	94%	93%	95%	92%
Average monthly earnings	\$1,618	\$1,524	\$1,505	\$2,213	\$1,936	\$1,293
Job provides health insurance coverage	59%	60%	59%	62%	56%	50%
Job provides fully paid leave	59%	57%	58%	69%	65%	44%
Primary housing situation						
Live in own house	67%	63%	68%	69%	71%	73%
Live in someone else's	32%	36%	32%	29%	27%	23%
Homeless	0.6%	0.2%	0.4%	0%	0%	7%
Living with at least one child	91%	89%	91%	89%	88%	78%
Living with someone who has previously been incarcerated	28%	25%	30%	28%	29%	34%
Living with someone who uses illegal drugs	4%	3%	7%	2%	4%	4%
Strongly agree that neighborhood/community...						
Is a good place to live	28%	33%	22%	27%	29%	23%
Is a good place to find a job	8%	8%	7%	6%	10%	11%
Drug selling is a major problem	13%	8%	16%	15%	18%	11%
Hard to stay out of trouble	4%	3%	5%	3%	4%	0%
Mean extended family support score (range 0–18; higher values indicate higher family support)	13.7	13.7	13.6	13.4	14.1	12.8

In most sites, women's housing situations resembled the cross-site average. However, rates of homelessness were lower than one percent in all samples except MN, where seven percent of the sample reported being homeless. The MN sample had a lower-than-average proportion of women who lived with at least one child, and its members were slightly more likely to be living with someone who was previously incarcerated.

The women’s health and substance use experiences during their partners’ incarcerations are shown in **Exhibit B-19**. Compared to the cross-site average, the NY and NJ samples reported higher overall and emotional health and lower depression. In contrast, the MN sample reported poorer health (including health problems limiting their work) and higher depression scores. Regarding health insurance coverage, the MN sample had a higher proportion of women covered only through a government program than the cross-site average, whereas the IN and NY samples had a higher proportion reporting coverage through private insurance only. No site sample was similar to the cross-site uninsured average; women in IN were more likely to report being uninsured, and women in all other sites were less likely. Not surprisingly, the IN sample was the most likely to report needing medical care but not getting it because of the cost.

**Exhibit B-19. Females’ Health and Substance Use, by Site**

	Total Sample	IN	OH	NY	NJ	MN
Excellent or very good overall health	40%	37%	41%	48%	46%	28%
Excellent or very good emotional health	39%	37%	35%	51%	53%	37%
Have a health problem that limits work	23%	21%	22%	28%	24%	34%
Depression score	13.0	12.9	13.8	11.9	11.1	14.3
Health insurance coverage						
Coverage through government program only	54%	41%	62%	52%	62%	71%
Coverage through private insurance only	22%	26%	17%	30%	22%	14%
No coverage	20%	29%	15%	10%	13%	13%
Needed medical care but could not get it because of cost	19%	25%	18%	8%	10%	13%
Pre-incarceration substance use						
Any alcohol consumption	43%	47%	47%	29%	28%	49%
Any illicit drug use	26%	30%	29%	18%	12%	27%
Current substance use						
(Drug users) felt that they should cut down on use	45%	38%	52%	32%	50%	63%
(Alcohol users) felt that they should cut down on use	25%	18%	31%	24%	21%	37%
(Drug users) felt guilty about use	37%	36%	40%	23%	40%	42%
(Alcohol users) felt guilty about use	16%	13%	19%	14%	6%	34%

Site-specific reports of women’s substance use prior to their partners’ incarcerations revealed prevalence rates below the cross-site average in the NY and NJ samples. This pattern is similar to that observed for men (see **Exhibit B-6**), with rates generally lower in NY and NJ than in the other sites. For current substance use, female users in MN generally reported more problematic use than the cross-site average.

### *Children's Experiences during Their Fathers' Incarcerations*

The focal children's experiences during their fathers' incarcerations are shown in **Exhibit B-20**. In general, most site-specific averages resembled the cross-site means. Consistent with the younger age of sample members in MN, the focal children in MN were younger than the cross-site average. Compared to the cross-site averages, a higher-than-average proportion of the NJ sample (both male and female) and the female NY sample reported that the focal child does not know about the father's incarceration, whereas a lower-than-average proportion of the IN sample (male and female) and the female MN sample reported this.

School-aged focal children were fairly similar on school-related characteristics across sites, although compared to the cross-site averages, lower proportions of the MN sample reported that the focal child ever repeated a grade.

The very low prevalence of problematic behaviors among older focal children makes it difficult to suggest any site-specific differences.

### *Expectations for Release*

**Exhibit B-21** shows men's and women's expectations for what their lives will be like after the man's release. In general, most site averages approximate the cross-site average on these variables, with the vast majority of sample members in every site intending to remain in a committed relationship (and expecting that their partner feels the same) after the man's release. Site-specific means for expectations about marriage and post-release residence also resemble the cross-site average. For several measures, men in NY were more optimistic than the cross-site average about the couple's post-release relationship, whereas men in OH were less optimistic.

Men's and women's expectations for parenting and coparenting are shown in **Exhibit B-22**. For most behaviors, site-specific averages resembled that of the total sample. However, compared to the cross-site averages, men and women in NJ and MN were less likely to expect the father to live with the child after his release and that the couple would make most decisions together (with the samples in these sites being more likely to anticipate that the mother would be making most decisions herself).

**Exhibit B-23** shows both partners' other expectations for the man's release. Generally, sample members across sites had similar expectations about tangible support they expected to receive from family and friends after the man's release. However, although anticipated support from family was generally similar for the IN, OH, NY, and NJ samples, male and female sample members in MN were less likely to expect such support from their family members. This difference was not as pronounced for support from friends.

**Exhibit B-20. Focal Child Experiences, by Site**

	Total Sample		IN		OH		NY		NJ		MN	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Focal child age (mean)	8 years	n/a	7 years	n/a	7 years	n/a	8 years	n/a	8 years	n/a	6 years	n/a
Focal child does not know about father's incarceration	22%	23%	16%	19%	24%	24%	24%	32%	31%	31%	29%	14%
Focal child is living with mother/female partner	90%	90%	93%	89%	94%	91%	93%	89%	94%	88%	97%	89%
Focal child is in custody of social services	0.8%	0.7%	0.6%	1.0%	0.8%	0.2%	1.0%	3.0%	1.0%	0.7%	0.0%	0.0%
Focal child has ever been placed in foster care or sent to live with a relative	10%	10%	14%	11%	10%	10%	5%	9%	9%	7%	4%	8%
Focal child aged 6+ Attends school	99%	99%	99%	98%	99%	99%	100%	100%	99%	99%	97%	100%
Participates in extracurricular activities	69%	58%	68%	58%	68%	59%	69%	71%	71%	53%	69%	48%
Ever suspended from school	19%	25%	20%	23%	20%	25%	11%	27%	19%	31%	16%	24%
Ever repeated a grade	11%	18%	11%	19%	13%	20%	8%	12%	12%	13%	0%	8%
Focal child aged 10+ Ever run away	4%	6%	2%	4%	6%	6%	6%	7%	4%	5%	8%	20%
Gotten into trouble for alcohol/drugs	4%	5%	2%	4%	4%	6%	6%	11%	2%	2%	15%	10%
Gotten into trouble with police	8%	8%	6%	7%	10%	9%	11%	7%	4%	7%	15%	10%

**Exhibit B-21. Expectations for Intimate Partnership after Release, by Site**

	Total Sample		IN		OH		NY		NJ		MN	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Want to remain in a committed relationship with partner	91%	86%	92%	87%	89%	82%	95%	90%	92%	89%	94%	92%
Feel that partner wants to remain in a committed relationship	88%	92%	90%	93%	84%	89%	92%	94%	94%	96%	89%	95%
Expect that couple will eventually marry ("a pretty good" or "almost certain" chance)	64%	66%	68%	69%	56%	64%	82%	60%	68%	62%	60%	69%
Expect that couple will live together	83%	75%	85%	76%	81%	71%	84%	85%	81%	72%	84%	81%
Anticipated difficulty having a good relationship after release												
Very easy	45%	34%	48%	40%	38%	25%	60%	41%	44%	36%	53%	25%
Pretty easy	45%	45%	44%	43%	50%	47%	34%	42%	46%	45%	39%	47%
Pretty hard	9%	17%	7%	14%	11%	21%	4%	14%	8%	15%	8%	24%
Very hard	1%	5%	1%	4%	1%	7%	2%	3%	2%	3%	0%	4%
Expectations for mutual support ("Strongly agree" that...)												
Partner will help you with whatever problems you face	69%	63%	70%	64%	64%	59%	77%	71%	73%	67%	64%	61%
You will help partner with whatever problems he/she faces	80%	69%	80%	72%	79%	65%	86%	79%	80%	67%	70%	65%
Partner will love and make you feel wanted	68%	66%	71%	67%	62%	62%	77%	76%	73%	71%	63%	61%
You will love and make partner feel wanted	79%	72%	79%	75%	77%	70%	84%	77%	79%	67%	73%	67%



**Exhibit B-22. Expectations for Parenting and Coparenting after Release, by Site**

	Total Sample		IN		OH		NY		NJ		MN	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Father-child contact												
Father will live with child	78%	68%	79%	70%	81%	66%	77%	76%	71%	65%	67%	68%
(Among fathers who will not live with child) Father will see child at least once a week	75%	63%	69%	63%	82%	65%	70%	67%	89%	66%	43%	44%
Father will provide financial support for focal child	92%	62%	91%	67%	91%	58%	91%	78%	98%	69%	91%	31%
Decision making post-release												
Couple will make most decisions together	69%	60%	69%	63%	75%	59%	70%	69%	61%	49%	51%	57%
Father will make most decisions himself	4%	1%	5%	0%	4%	0%	0%	1%	5%	3%	2%	2%
Mother will make most decisions herself	16%	34%	14%	31%	13%	36%	18%	23%	22%	42%	29%	40%
Someone else will make most decisions	11%	6%	11%	6%	8%	5%	12%	6%	12%	6%	19%	2%

**Exhibit B-23. Other Expectations for Release, by Site**

	Total Sample		IN		OH		NY		NJ		MN	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Anticipated support from family/friends Have a family member who will help with transportation	90%	85%	91%	86%	92%	85%	92%	84%	88%	83%	76%	73%
Have a family member who will provide you with a place to live	92%	86%	92%	86%	93%	89%	96%	87%	88%	84%	81%	76%
Have a family member who will loan you money	89%	85%	89%	84%	91%	86%	91%	84%	88%	91%	75%	75%
Have a friend who will help with transportation	73%	81%	74%	83%	73%	80%	72%	81%	74%	81%	68%	73%
Have a friend who will provide you with a place to live	69%	72%	68%	71%	71%	74%	68%	72%	68%	71%	63%	67%
Have a friend who will loan you money	70%	75%	69%	73%	71%	77%	72%	78%	71%	77%	71%	61%
How easy/hard for male partner to get a job												
Very easy	14%	8%	15%	9%	12%	7%	20%	8%	16%	10%	9%	9%
Pretty easy	30%	23%	34%	26%	23%	18%	38%	29%	33%	27%	27%	27%
Pretty hard	39%	43%	39%	43%	41%	45%	31%	41%	34%	42%	52%	31%
Very hard	17%	25%	12%	22%	24%	31%	12%	22%	17%	21%	13%	34%

(continued)

**Exhibit B-23. Other Expectations for Release, by Site (continued)**

	Total Sample		IN		OH		NY		NJ		MN	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
How easy/hard for male partner to support himself												
Very easy	21%	13%	25%	13%	19%	13%	24%	14%	18%	14%	18%	17%
Pretty easy	43%	33%	43%	33%	43%	32%	45%	29%	45%	35%	39%	38%
Pretty hard	28%	36%	26%	39%	30%	33%	24%	39%	30%	35%	39%	27%
Very hard	7%	18%	5%	15%	8%	22%	8%	18%	8%	16%	4%	18%
Expect that male partner will ever go back to prison	3%	19%	2%	15%	4%	26%	4%	5%	2%	19%	9%	30%
Expect that male partner will use illegal drugs	16%	22%	14%	17%	22%	29%	9%	9%	12%	17%	21%	25%

Compared to the cross-site average, men in MN and OH anticipated more difficulty in getting a job after release, whereas the men in NY anticipated less. Interestingly, these expectations mirror the pre-incarceration employment “reality” reported in **Exhibit B-5**, which shows the highest pre-incarceration employment in the NY sample and the lowest in MN and OH.

Expectations for the man’s ability to support himself after release reflect the cross-site average in most sites. Fairly substantial variation exists in expectations for the male partner’s drug use and likelihood of going back to prison. Both men and women in MN were more likely than sample members in other sites to expect that the male would be reincarcerated. In addition, women in OH were more likely than average to expect that the male partner would use illegal drugs and be reincarcerated at some point, whereas women in NY were much less likely than average to anticipate both of these behaviors.

### *Summary*

The data presented in this appendix suggest moderate to substantial site variation in several key background characteristics. The site samples differed on several demographic characteristics (mainly age and race/ethnicity), criminal history, substance use history, and for the male samples, incarceration characteristics. Some of these differences—particularly those associated with age and duration of incarceration—likely affected other patterns that were suggested by the data. For example, site differences in the respondents’ own ages almost certainly influenced site variability in respondents’ children’s ages and could have influenced other characteristics, such as educational attainment and health status. Similarly, large differences by site in the men’s duration of incarceration likely influenced site differences in the number of transfers and disciplinary infractions and may also have influenced characteristics such as the frequency of in-prison family contact. Therefore, the relationships between different variables are important to keep in mind when interpreting the data.

Given the disproportionately large representation of IN and OH, averages in those sites were closer to the cross-site averages. Generally, the small MN sample was the most distinct from the other sites, and the greatest contrasts often existed between the MN and NY samples. Specifically, the MN sample clearly had the most extensive criminal history, shortest duration of incarceration, smallest proportion of married respondents, and shortest average relationship duration of all the sites, whereas the NY sample reflected the opposite end of the spectrum for all of those variables.

Some of the differences observed, such as employment characteristics and barriers to in-prison family contact, may be due to contextual characteristics and state policies rather than sample characteristics, although this cannot be determined from the data. For example, site differences in men’s pre-incarceration employment and women’s current employment may be due to actual employment conditions in the states rather than the employability of the samples (e.g., criminal history, education, job skills). Similarly, variation in in-person family contact during incarceration and the reported barriers to family contact may be due to state correctional policies. However, neither of these questions can be answered from the data.

Despite several fundamental differences in background characteristics, the site samples were also comparable on a variety of family process domains. Few consistent differences in intimate relationship quality, coparenting experiences, or parenting characteristics existed. In addition, based on the limited set of variables explored, the focal children were similar across sites. The site samples also revealed comparable childhood parenting situations and stability, exposure to extended family criminal and substance abuse history, peer influences, extended family support, housing characteristics, and neighborhood quality. The female samples were particularly comparable on many domains.

Finally, expectations for release were very similar across the site samples, with men and women from all sites expressing similarly optimistic expectations about resuming intimate and father-child relationships and receiving tangible support from family and friends after the men's release from incarceration.