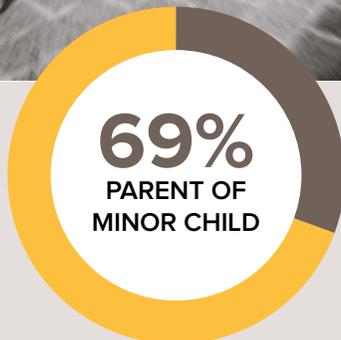


# Parents in Minnesota Jails and their Minor Children

NOVEMBER 2017

## PARENTS



The results of this survey indicate that about 2 of every 3 adults in county correctional facilities are parents of at least one child under the age of 18. Women were slightly more likely to report being parents than men.

In partnership with the Association of Minnesota Counties and with support from the Minnesota Sheriff's Association, researchers at the University of Minnesota conducted a study of parents in Minnesota jails and their children. On a single day in March 2017, 65 (81%) of the 80 county correctional facilities in Minnesota administered a survey to the inmates in their facility. In total, 2,675 adults (84%) completed the survey of the 3,201 inmates invited to participate.

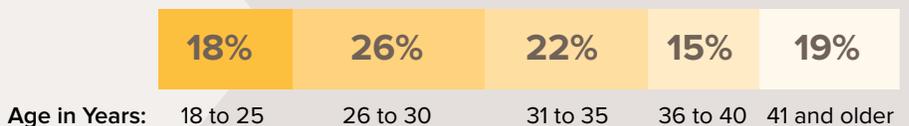
The anonymous survey assessed:

- Key demographic information (age, race/ethnicity, sex)
- Parenting and pregnancy status
- Child characteristics (number and age of children)
- Parent characteristics (employment and residency pre-incarceration)

This report summarizes information about the number of parents held in Minnesota county correctional facilities. The data can be used to inform jail programs and policies aimed at supporting incarcerated parents and their families.

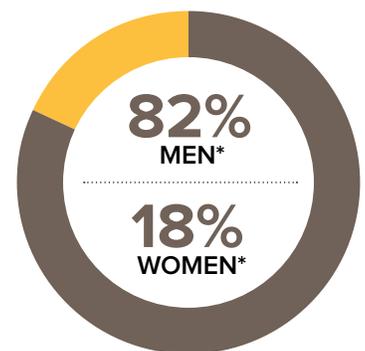
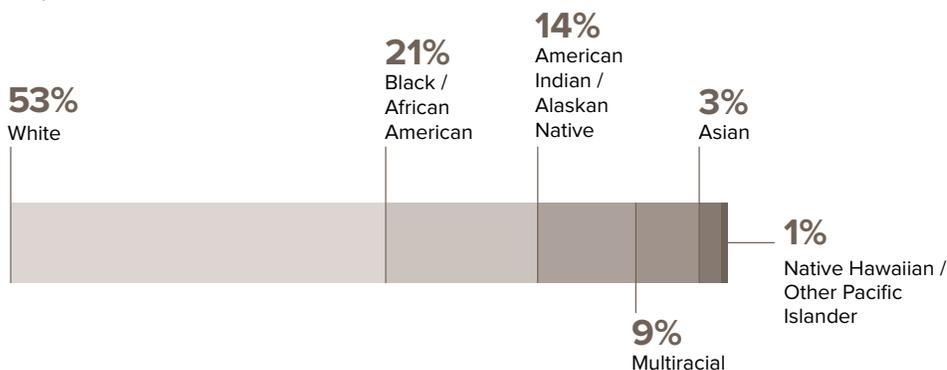
### AGE

Parents ranged in age from 18 to 86 years, with an average age of 33 years. Nearly 80% of parents with minor children were under the age of 40.



### RACE

Although most incarcerated parents in Minnesota are white, parents from racial and ethnic minority groups are disproportionately represented. About 16% identified as Hispanic / Latino.



Most parents with minor children who completed the survey were men.

\*An additional <1% identified as "other" or gender non-conforming.

The goal of this project was to assess the number of parents held in Minnesota county jails in order to inform jail programs and policies aimed at supporting incarcerated parents and their families.

## FATHERS OF MINOR CHILDREN



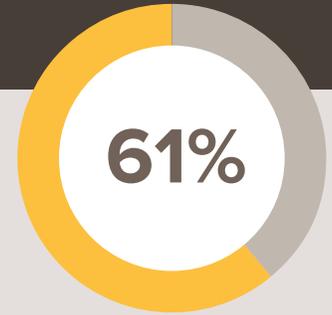
### NUMBER OF MINOR CHILDREN

Fathers reported having between 1 and 14 children under the age of 18, with an average of about 2 minor children.



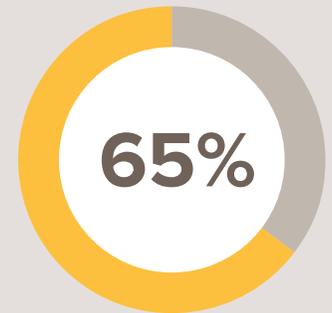
### PREGNANCY STATUS OF PARTNER

About 1 in 12 incarcerated fathers reported that they had a partner who was pregnant. Another 6% said they didn't know whether or not their partner was pregnant.



### EMPLOYMENT PRIOR TO ARREST

Over 60% of fathers with minor children reported being employed in the month before their arrest.



### RESIDENCY PRIOR TO ARREST

Approximately 65% of fathers with minor children were living with one or more of their children before their arrest.



### INTEREST IN PARENTING CLASS

A majority of fathers with minor children were interested in participating in a parenting class during their incarceration.

# Parents in Minnesota Jails and their Minor Children

## MOTHERS OF MINOR CHILDREN



### NUMBER OF MINOR CHILDREN

Mothers reported having between 1 and 9 children under the age of 18, with an average of about 2 minor children.



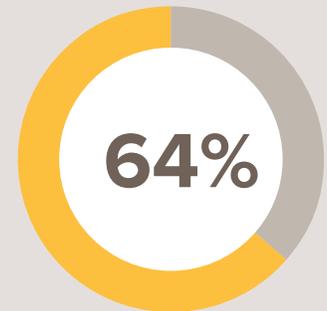
### PREGNANCY STATUS

About 1 in 17 incarcerated mothers reported that they were pregnant. Another 5% said they didn't know whether or not they were pregnant.



### EMPLOYMENT PRIOR TO ARREST

Over 30% of mothers with minor children reported being employed in the month before their arrest.



### RESIDENCY PRIOR TO ARREST

About 64% of mothers with minor children were living with their children before their arrest.



### INTEREST IN PARENTING CLASS

Most mothers with minor children were interested in participating in a parenting class during incarceration.

From these data, on any given day, an estimated **9,898 children** under the age of 18 have a parent currently incarcerated in a county correctional facility in Minnesota.



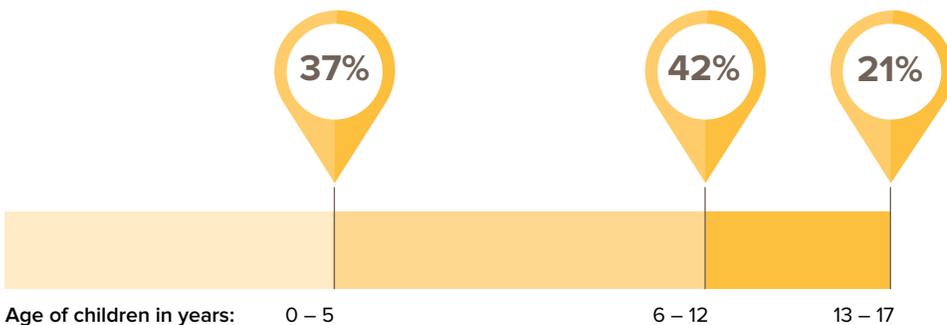
## MINOR CHILDREN

Parental incarceration is an adverse childhood experience. When a parent goes to jail, children may experience challenges at home, in school, and in their communities, including:

- Financial and material hardship
- Unpredictability in family relationships
- Housing and school mobility
- Difficulty with school relationships and performance
- Poor physical health
- Struggles with mental health
- Social and institutional stigma

## AGES OF MINOR CHILDREN

Among all minor children of parents in jail, about 37% of children were between 0 and 5 years old, 42% were between the ages of 6 and 12, and the remaining 21% of children were between 13 and 17 years old.



## IMPLICATIONS FOR MINNESOTA JAILS

This study is part of a program of research at the University of Minnesota focused on understanding the strengths and needs of incarcerated parents and their minor children. We recommend that correctional facilities work in partnership with other local agencies and non-profit organizations to identify practices and policies that support families affected by incarceration, including:

- Partnering with local law-enforcement to implement trauma-informed arrest policies
- Implementing parenting education and support programs
- Providing family-friendly visiting spaces
- Implementing re-entry programs that support the needs of parents

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