

# The Black Family and Mass Incarceration

Bruce Western<sup>1</sup>  
Harvard University

Christopher Wildeman  
Princeton University

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<sup>1</sup>This research was supported by grants from the National Science Foundation, the Russell Sage Foundation, and a Guggenheim Fellowship.

## After Moynihan...

The problems of joblessness, social disorder, addiction, and serious violence worsened in poor neighborhoods.

A political backlash against Civil Rights propelled punitive responses to urban social problems.

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The core social problem was not family breakdown; it was chronic idleness among young men in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty.

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# Our Argument

- ▶ We are living in an era of mass imprisonment. . .
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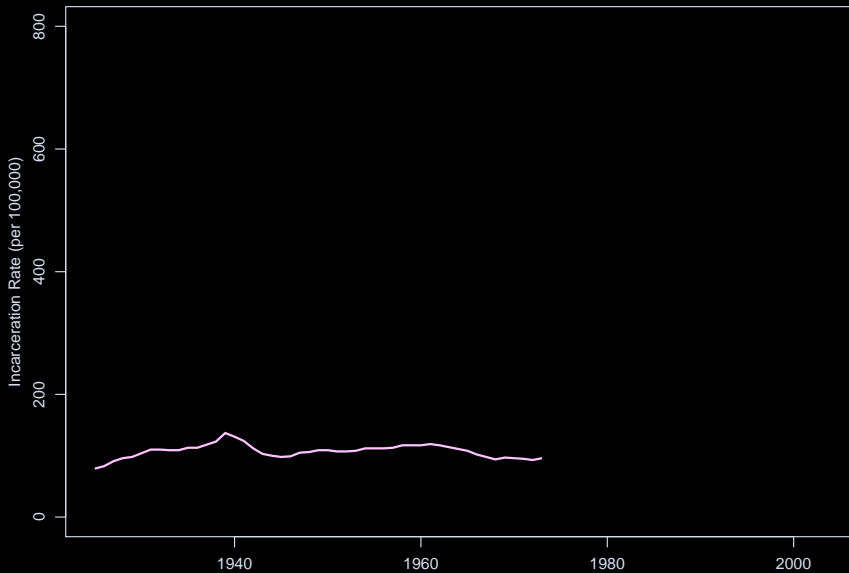
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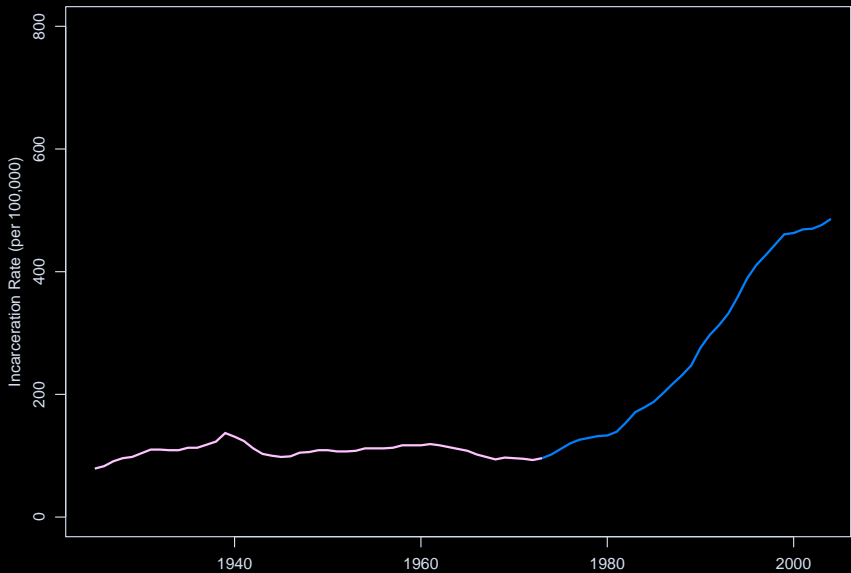
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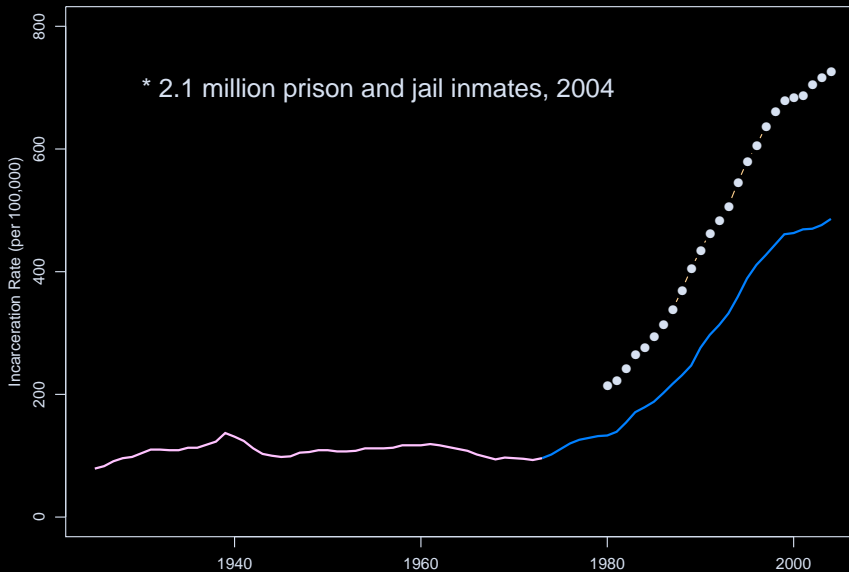
# U.S. Incarceration Rates, 1925-1972



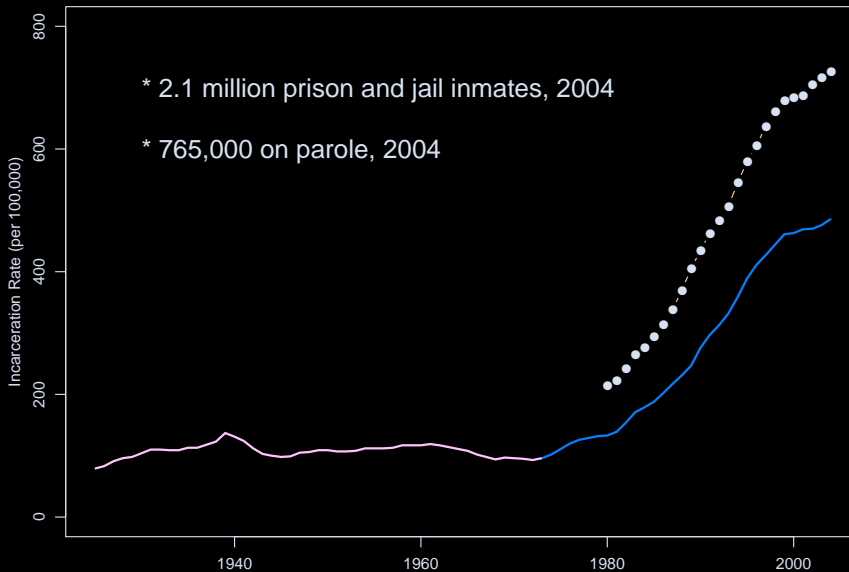
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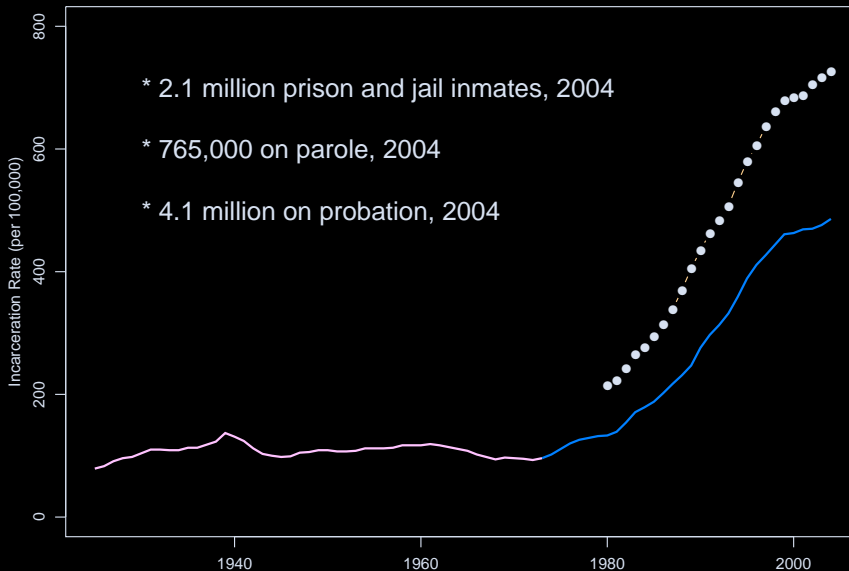
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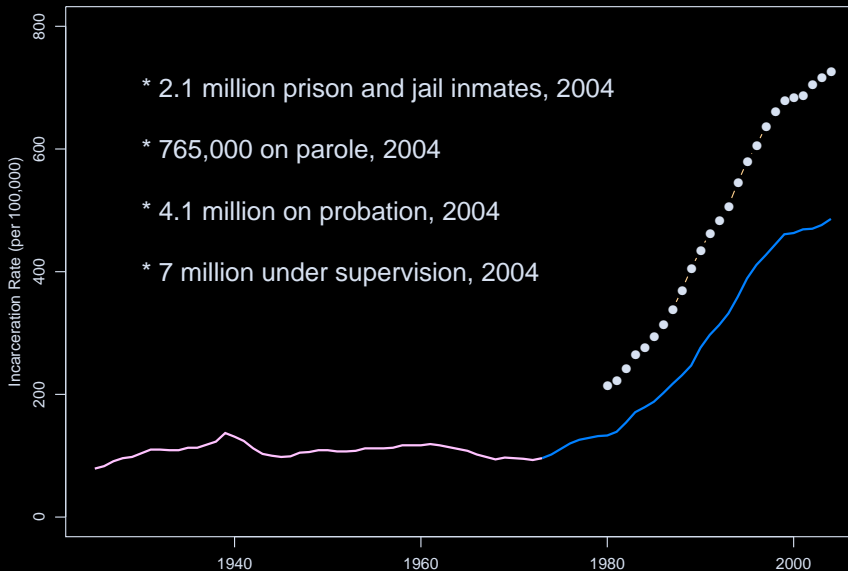
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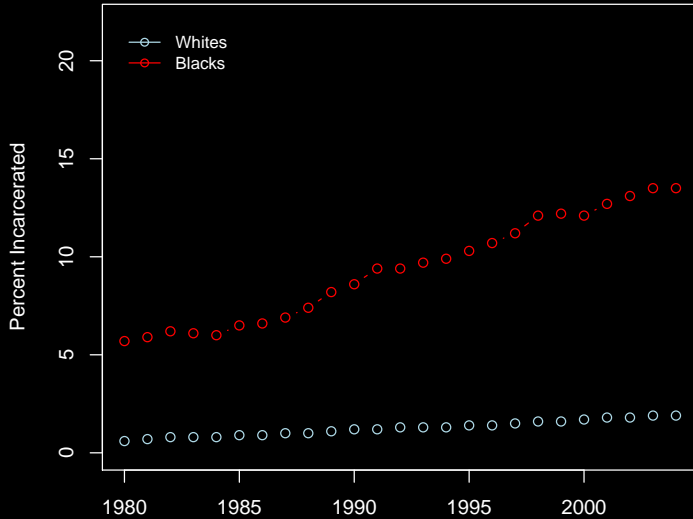
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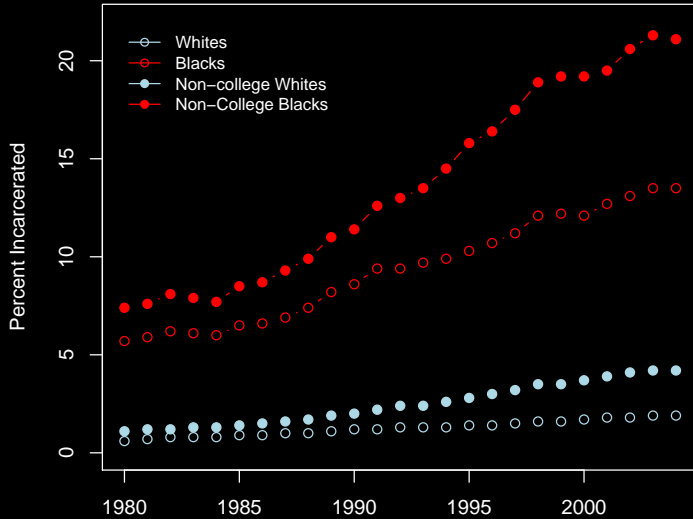
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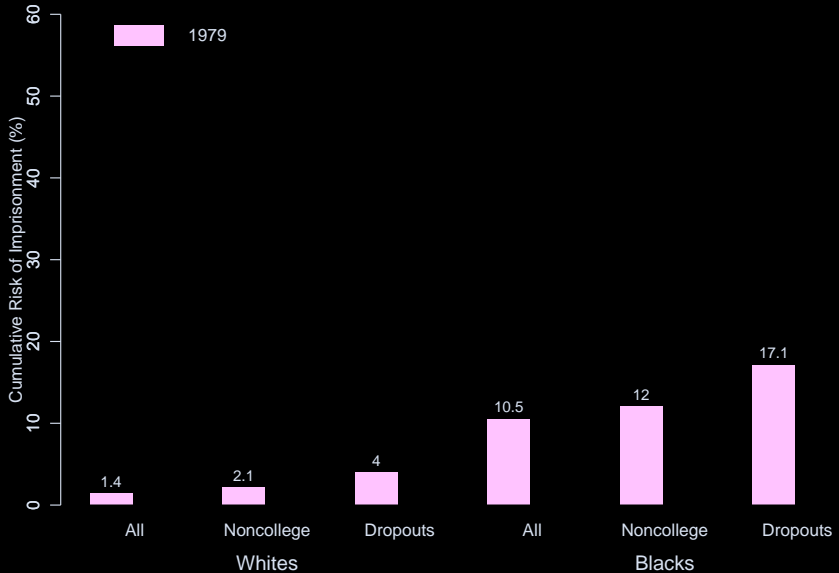
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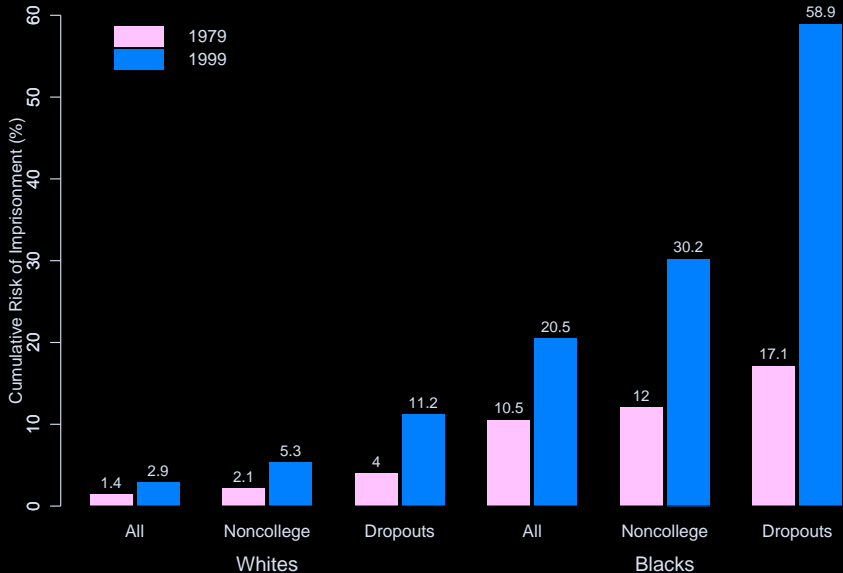
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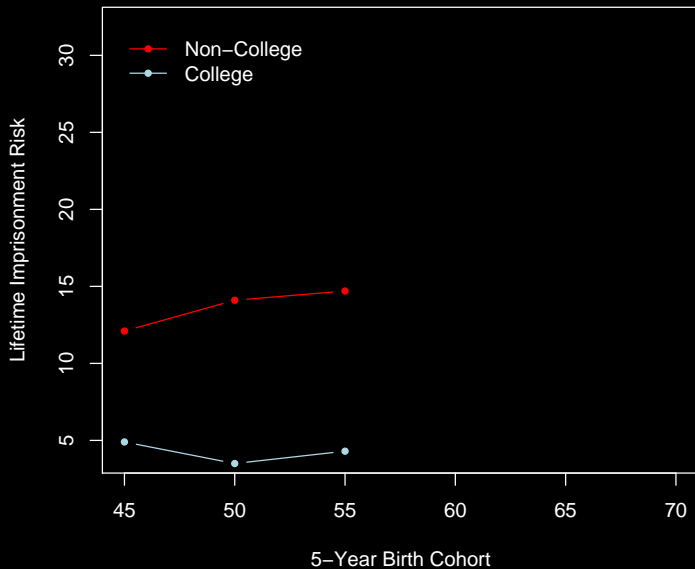
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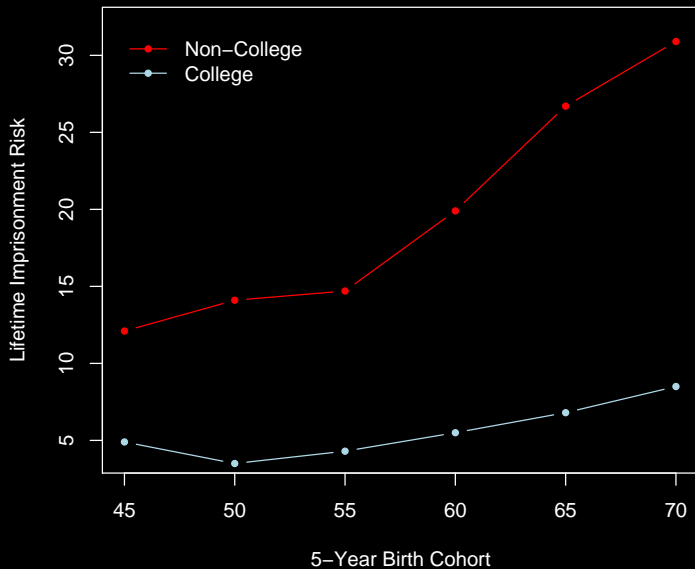
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## Lifetime Risk of Imprisonment, Black Men



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# Imprisonment and the Life Course

White and black men, born 1965–1969 experiencing a life event by 1999 (percent).

	Whites	Blacks
Marriage	72%	59%
Bachelor's Degree	32	13
Military Service	14	17
Imprisonment	3	22

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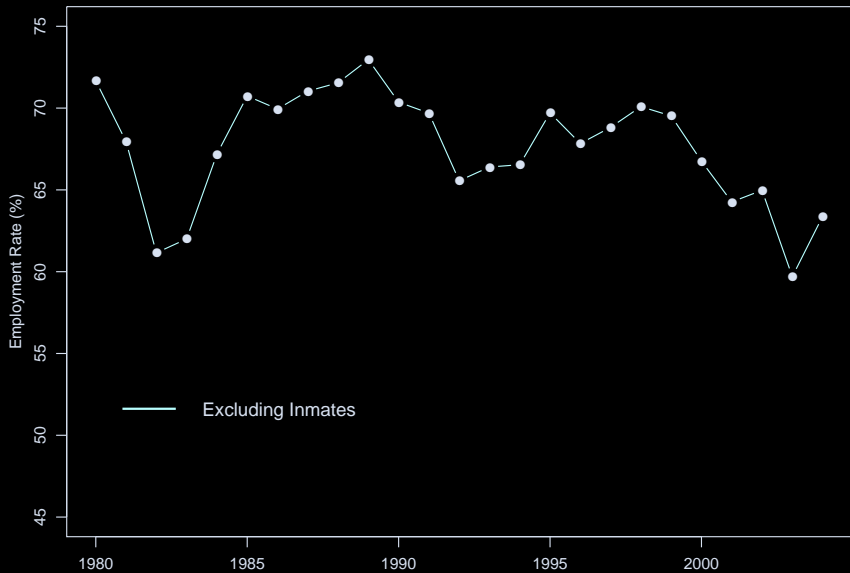
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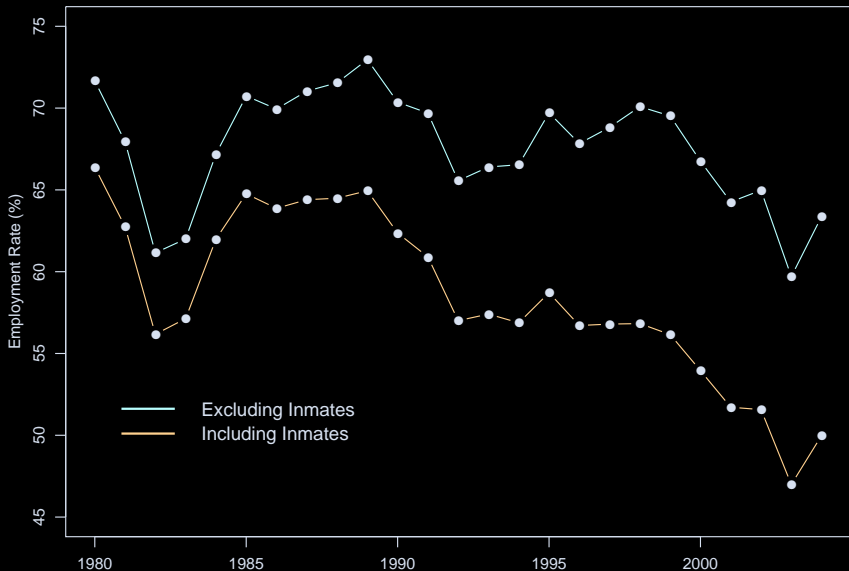
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# Employment Rate, Noncollege Black Men 22-30



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# Prisoners as Fathers

- ▶ About 70 percent of prisoners are fathers (same as the general population, given age and race)
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- ▶ 62 percent of imprisoned fathers report at least monthly contact with their children while incarcerated, either by phone (42%), mail (50%), visits (21%)

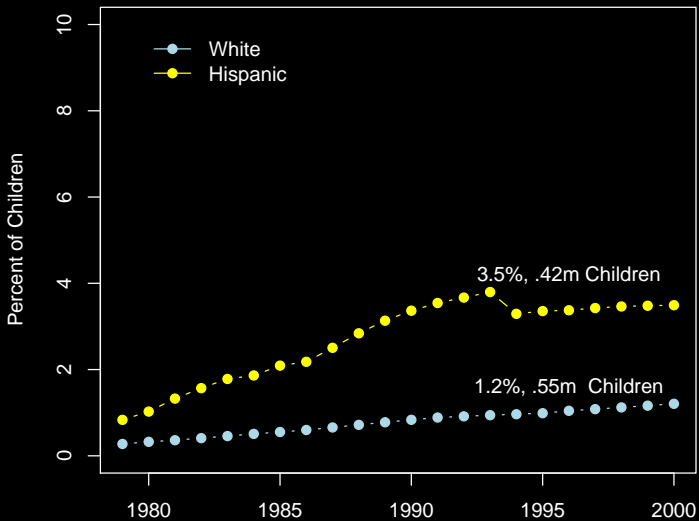
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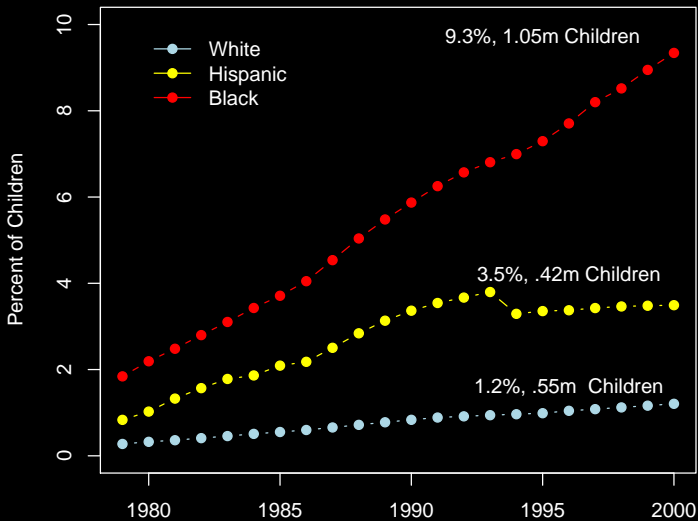
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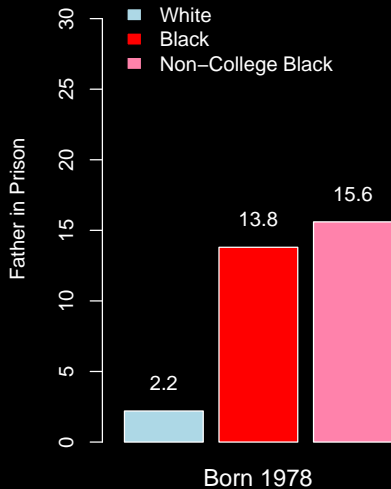
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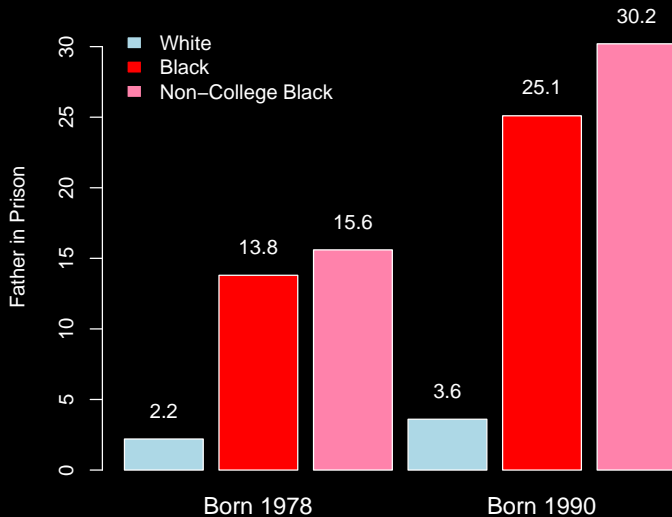
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## Father Imprisoned for Children by Age 14



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# What Are the Consequences for Families?

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- ▶ Economic insecurity? Probably, but how much?
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- ▶ Parental imprisonment has become a normal part of the social experience of the children of these men
- ▶ If economic insecurity, prisonization and stigma produce a pathway to incarceration for children, mass incarceration becomes self-sustaining
- ▶ And the prison would form part of a *system of inequality* of the kind Moynihan envisioned

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