



## Secondary Prisonization: The Facts

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### What is Secondary Prisonization?

Prisonization is a term that describes the process through which new inmates learn the prison subculture and adjust to the way the prison works as a social and cultural system. Secondary prisonization, on the other hand, refers to the impacts or effects that the incarceration of a family member has on their relatives. For instance, loss of rights and resources, as well as the negative psychological and social effects of having an incarcerated loved one, are examples of secondary prisonization.[1] In relation to the psychological effects, five domains have been identified: psychological disorders, those related to affectivity (loneliness, lack of support), low self-esteem, distorted perception of the world, and hostility towards penitentiary institutions, or a general distrust of the criminal legal system.[2]

### Have you Heard? [3, 4]

- People with incarcerated loved ones have shorter life expectancies and poorer health.
- Black families are disproportionately impacted by incarceration and are more likely to have an incarcerated loved one.
- One in four American adults has had a sibling incarcerated. One in five has had a parent sent to jail or prison. One in eight has had a child incarcerated.
- In 2018, roughly 6.5 million American adults had an immediate family member in jail or prison.

### What are the Consequences?

Through the imprisonment of their kin, mass incarceration brings millions of women—especially poor women of color—into frequent contact with the criminal justice system. These women experience restricted rights, diminished resources, social marginalization, and other consequences of penal confinement, even though they are legally innocent and reside outside the prison's boundaries.[1] Women with an incarcerated loved one often report difficulties with financial support and lack of access to services. In other words, much of the incarcerated population is made up of men, most of which have mothers, wives, or girlfriends back home, who are burdened with becoming the sole financial provider and holding the family together in their absence.

### How to Support Women and Families with an Incarcerated Loved One?

- Reduce the stigma associated with incarceration.
- Increase the availability of government-funded social services that provide resources, including financial support, to families with incarcerated loved ones.
- Implement programs that increase familial contact during incarceration and help families maintain a connection with their incarcerated loved one.
- Volunteer with/donate to local non-profits that serve families with an incarcerated loved one.

### Resources

#### Texas

- The Texas Incarcerated Families Association -- 512-371-0900 <https://tifa.org/>
- Seedling Mentor Program -- 512-323-6371 <https://www.seedlingmentors.org/>
- Texas Jail Project -- <https://www.texasjailproject.org/>
- Inside Books Project -- <https://insidebooksproject.org/resource-guide-1>

#### National

- The National Resource Center on Children and Families of the Incarcerated -- <https://nrccfi.camden.rutgers.edu/>
- Strong Prison Wives and Families -- <https://strongprisonwivesandfamilies.com/>
- Families Against Mandatory Minimums -- [https://famm.org/?gclid=Cj0KQCqIA-62tBhDSARIsAO7twbZ3an9bWjEs62arO96u7C5L8SwC1aPTEL\\_GUsR5nFOh8eOc5RML0bkaAlgAEALw\\_wcB](https://famm.org/?gclid=Cj0KQCqIA-62tBhDSARIsAO7twbZ3an9bWjEs62arO96u7C5L8SwC1aPTEL_GUsR5nFOh8eOc5RML0bkaAlgAEALw_wcB)

### References

- [1] Comfort, M. L. (2003). In The Tube At San Quentin: The "Secondary Prisonization" of Women Visiting Inmates. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 32(1), 77-107. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891241602238939>
- [2] Reizabal, L., Garcia, I., Sansinenea, E., Sarrionandia, A., Fernández, E., & Lopez-de-Ipina, K. (2023). Psychological effects of secondary prisonization on older parents. *Trends in Psychology*, 31(1), 16-30.
- [3] Widra, E. (2021). New data: People with incarcerated loved ones have shorter life expectancies and poorer health. Prison Policy Initiative. <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2021/07/12/family-incarceration/>
- [4] Equal Justice Initiative. (2018). Half of Americans Have Family Members Who Have Been Incarcerated. <https://eji.org/news/half-of-americans-have-family-members-who-have-been-incarcerated/>

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## Resources

- Texas Abuse Hotline (suspicions of abuse, neglect, and exploitation of children, adults with disabilities, or people 65 +) <https://www.txabusehotline.org/Login/>  
800-252-5400
- Texas Council on Family Violence <https://tcfv.org/survivor-resources/>
- Texas Association Against Sexual Assault <https://taasa.org/get-help/>
- National Domestic Violence Hotline 800-799-7233
- National Sexual Assault Hotline 800-656-4673
- National Human Trafficking Hotline 888-373-7888
- Aging and Disability Resource Center 855-937-2372
- Victim Connect Resource Center 855-484-2846
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 988