Partner Incarceration and Women’s Nonstandard Work Arrangements

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Abstract

In response to the expansion of mass incarceration and its uneven distribution across the population, a growing body of literature documents the economic consequences of incarceration for individuals and families. We know that men’s incarceration often exacerbates economic instability and material hardship for already vulnerable families. However, we know little about whether and how women heading these families use employment to address the financial strain.

This paper uses data from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study to examine how men’s incarceration is associated with two types of nonstandard work – working multiple jobs and working nonstandard schedules – among their female partners. Results show that the incarceration of women’s partners is associated with working multiple jobs but not with working nonstandard schedules. There is further evidence that the association between partner incarceration and multiple job holding is concentrated among black and Hispanic women and women living with (but not married to) their partners prior to incarceration. Given the implications of multiple job holding for stress and work-family conflict, these findings suggest that the economic consequences of incarceration may increase inequalities among women and their families.