

An Update on Arrestees Who Report Being Homeless: How Do They Differ from Other Arrestees?

Over the past decade, a number of significant changes have taken place in California which affected when and how some individuals returned to the community after incarceration¹. While criminal justice reform was one of the goals of these statewide changes, concern has been voiced that the underlying needs of some individuals may be going unmet and that the homeless population may be growing and disproportionately affected as a result². To better understand how the arrestee population has changed over time, soon-to-be-released SAM (Substance Abuse Monitoring) data from the SANDAG study, that involves interviewing arrestees in local detention facilities about their drug use history and other risk factors, were analyzed comparing arrestees who reported a history of homelessness to those who did not, updating an earlier CJ Flash that was released in 2014, with data from 2013, prior to the passage of Proposition 47 in November 2014.

As the analyses here show, a greater proportion of arrestees reported ever (62%) being homeless in 2015, compared to 2013 (56%) and of those who were ever homeless, a greater percentage were currently homeless (40% versus 28%). In addition, analyses show that arrestees with a history of homelessness differ in significant ways from those with no history, including current drug use, having mental health issues, having a history of juvenile contact with the justice and dependency system, as well as other current alcohol and other drug using behaviors that put them at higher risk for injury. As the region continues to focus on how to best meet the needs of this population, the hope is that this information helps to inform the discussion.



*New question added to the study in 2015.

¹ Lofstrom, M., Bird, M., & Martin, B. (2016). *California's Historic Corrections Reforms*. San Francisco, CA: Public Policy Institute of California.
² See for example McSwain, D. (September 18, 2016). Leniency has been hard on the homeless. San Diego, CA: *San Diego Union Tribune*.

Table 1: HOW ARRESTEES WHO REPORT EVER BEING HOMELESS DIFFER FROM THOSE WHO REPORT SOME FORM OF MORE STABLE HOUSING³

	Ever Homeless	Never Homeless
Age		
Under 25	18%	29%
25-39	47%	45%
40 and older	35%	26%
Race		
White	54%	32%
Black	22%	18%
Hispanic	24%	49%
Most Serious Booking Charge		
Violent	19%	29%
Property	35%	32%
Drug	20%	16%
Other	26%	23%
TOTAL	363-385	219-231

Table 2: OTHER WAYS ARRESTEES WITH A HISTORY OF HOMELESSNESS DIFFER FROM OTHER ARRESTEES³

	Ever Homeless	Never Homeless
Previous arrest as an adult	91%	69%
Unemployed & looking for work	70%	37%
Single, not married	67%	59%
Positive meth	60%	32%
Born in San Diego County	54%	40%
Ever received drug treatment	54%	27%
Ever sold drugs	49%	28%
Positive marijuana	49%	39%
Arrested as a juvenile	48%	39%
Committed crime to support drug habit	48%	17%
Ever diagnosed with a mental health disorder	42%	16%
Ever in prison	37%	19%
Ever injected drugs	36%	12%
Ever visited an ER for alcohol- or drug-related incident	35%	15%
No high school degree/equivalent	28%	18%
Ever tried spice	28%	18%
Ever overdosed	25%	9%
Ever in foster care	19%	5%
Positive opiates	15%	8%
TOTAL	378-385	208-231

³ All data presented in Tables 1 and 2 significantly different at $p < .05$.