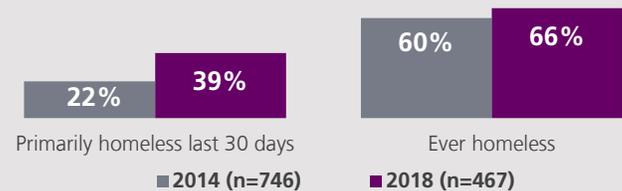


## Homelessness Among Justice System-Involved Individuals in San Diego County

The Applied Research Division of SANDAG conducts annual interviews with juvenile and adult arrestees within 48 hours of their booking into a local detention facility through a program called SAM (Substance Abuse Monitoring). As part of these interviews, questions are asked regarding drug use history and other risk-taking behavior and because a confidential and anonymous urine sample is provided, an objective measure of drug use trends over time is available. Because of the regional dialogue regarding homelessness,<sup>1</sup> questions were added to the SAM interview in 2018 regarding history of homelessness; how, when, and where homelessness first occurred; and the use of regional shelters. This CJ Flash highlights this new information, with the full report available [here](#).

**Highlight 1 The percent of interviewed arrestees who reported being primarily homeless<sup>2</sup> in the past 30 days and ever homeless has increased over time.** In 2018, 39% had been primarily homeless in the past 30 days and 66% had ever been homeless.



**Highlight 2 The median age of first homelessness for those who had ever been homeless was 26 and just over three-quarters (77%) said they had first become homeless in San Diego County.** The percent of homeless who said they became homeless initially in San Diego County through the WeAllCount effort was similar at 78%.<sup>1</sup>



**Highlight 3 While there was no gender difference in ever being homeless, there was in how many times homelessness occurred, with males less likely to report being homeless only once.** The top reasons identified overall for being homeless included money issues, drugs, loss of job, loss of family, and being kicked out or running away. Males were more likely to report they became homeless because of losing a job, while females were more likely to say it was because of abuse/violence.



- **36%** of males only homeless once
- Males more likely to cite **loss of job** (28% of males versus 15% females)

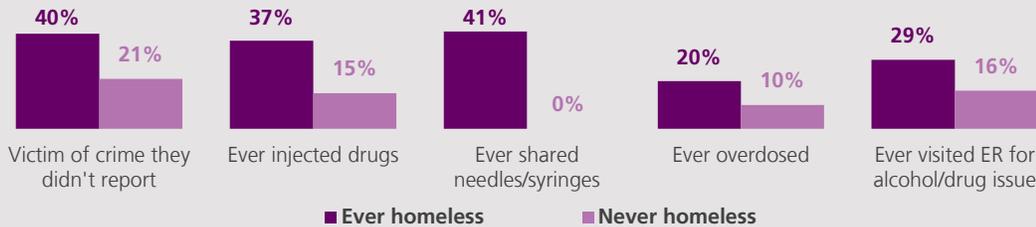


- **51%** of females only homeless once
- Females more likely to cite **abuse or violence** (19% of females versus 8% of males)

<sup>1</sup> According to the 2019 regional count, there are 8,102 sheltered and unsheltered homeless in San Diego County ([rtfhsd.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Pages-from-2019-General-Fact-Sheet-0429199\\_final.pdf](http://rtfhsd.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Pages-from-2019-General-Fact-Sheet-0429199_final.pdf)).

<sup>2</sup> Individuals were asked where they lived most of the time in the past 30 days and were provided with choices to select, which included a house or apartment, a group living situation, or no fixed residence/homeless.

**Highlight 4** Those who reported ever being homeless were more likely than those who did not to have been a victim of a crime they did not report, ever injected drugs, have shared needles/syringes (of those who had injected), ever overdosed, and have visited an emergency room because of an alcohol- or drug-related issue.



**Highlight 5** Some arrestee characteristics were associated with reporting ever being homeless, as shown in the following table.

Who was more likely to report ever being homeless:	
<b>Whites</b>	75% of individuals who identified as White, versus 66% of Blacks and 52% of Hispanics were ever homeless
<b>Divorced</b>	75% of those divorced, versus 38% of those married and 67% of those single
<b>Older</b>	75% of those 40 and older, versus 44% of those under 25 and 66% of those 25 to 39
<b>Test positive for any drug</b>	72% of those positive for a drug versus 43% of those not positive
<b>Test positive for meth</b>	82% of those positive for meth versus 43% of those not positive
<b>Previous adult arrest</b>	73% of those arrested previously versus 39% of those who had not been
<b>Arrested as a juvenile</b>	74% of those with a juvenile arrest versus 60% of those who had not been
<b>Prior jail booking</b>	74% of those with a prior booking versus 38% of those who had not been
<b>Committed crime to support drug habit</b>	81% of those who had committed crime to support a drug habit versus 59% of those who had not
<b>Involved in drug sales or distribution</b>	73% of those who reported an involvement in drug sales or distribution versus 60% of those who were not
<b>Exchanged sex for something</b>	85% of those who reported exchanging sex for something versus 63% of those who had not
<b>Mental health diagnosis</b>	79% of those with a mental health diagnosis versus 58% of those who did not have one
<b>Overnight stay in mental health facility</b>	84% of those with an overnight stay in a facility versus 59% of those who had not
<b>Seriously thought about suicide</b>	81% of those who had seriously thought of committing suicide versus 59% of those who had not
<b>Attempted suicide</b>	85% of those who had ever attempted suicide versus 61% of those who had not
<b>Previously received drug treatment</b>	75% of those who had previously received drug treatment versus 59% of those who had not
Who was less likely to report ever being homeless:	
<b>Current violent offense</b>	52% of those with a most serious booking charge, versus 66% of those with a property offense, 67% a drug offense, and 74% an "other" offense were ever homeless
<b>Currently taking mental health medication</b>	60% of those taking their medication as prescribed, versus 100% who were not
<b>Employed at the time of the arrest</b>	51% of those currently employed versus 74% of those who were not

**Highlight 6** Just over half (56%) of those who reported being homeless in the past 30 days said they had children (regardless of their age), 4% reported they lived with children now, and 36% reported ever having an open case with Child Protective Services.

According to the 2019 WeAllCount results, 3% of the unsheltered in San Diego County are families with at least one child.<sup>1</sup>

**56%** have children

**4%** live with a child



**Highlight 7** Almost 1 in 4 arrestees (23%) who said they were homeless in the past month said they thought they would be homeless one year from now. About 3 in 5 (58%) of these individuals said it was because they couldn't afford a home and 42% said they like their current status.



**Highlight 8** Just under 1 in 5 (18%) of those who reported being homeless in the past 12 months said they had stayed in a shelter this past year. Some justice-involved individuals were more likely to use a shelter, including females (25% versus 15% of males), those older than 40 and younger than 25 (11% of those 25 to 39), those who had served in the military (16% of those who did not), those not positive for a drug (16% of those positive), and those without children (3% of those with children). Reasons for not staying in a shelter included restrictions at the shelter, safety concerns, wait lists, and inability to bring others. Other reasons included personal preference, having another place to stay, and stigma they perceived from staying in a shelter.

Who was more likely to use a shelter?	Why not use a shelter?
<b>25%</b> Females	<b>30%</b> Restrictions at the shelter
<b>25%</b> 40 and older <b>21%</b> Younger than 25	<b>26%</b> Concerns for safety
<b>33%</b> Served in the military	<b>24%</b> Other reasons
<b>30%</b> Not positive for a drug when arrested	<b>23%</b> Waitlist
<b>20%</b> No children	<b>15%</b> Can't bring family, friends, or pets

## Takeaways

- A greater percentage of the detained jail population has a history of homelessness today than previously.
- Incarcerated individuals with a history of homelessness are at greater risk than non-homeless individuals, including ones related to drug use and mental health.
- Shelter use varies among the homeless population and lack of use is related to a number of reasons.
- While the majority of those homeless think they will have stable housing in a year, about 1 in 4 don't think they will, either because they can't afford housing or they like living on the street.