

Verifying Homelessness among Persons Released from Correctional Institutions

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The data collected from the City of Pasadena 2011 Homeless Survey reveals that there is a tangible link between discharge from incarceration and homelessness. The data also indicates that the link may grow stronger as the result of a recent U.S. Supreme Court decision requiring California to reduce its prison population by 33,000 inmates during the next two years and as a result of the State of California cutting hundreds of millions of dollars from inmate rehabilitation programs during the past three years because of budgetary restraints. Also, a new California law designed to reduce the state's overcrowded prisons by focusing on early release of low-risk offenders who meet criteria for good behavior, may have already increased the ranks of the homeless during the past couple of years.

This report verifies that 21% or 61 of the 292 homeless men and women who participated in the survey during February, 2011 were released from correctional institutions, such as a prison or jail, after serving a court-ordered sentence during the 12 months prior to the survey. Of the 292 participants, 206 were men and 49 or nearly one of every four men (24%) was released from a correctional institution during the 12 months prior to the survey. Eighty-six of the participants were women and 12 or 14% were released from a correctional institution during the 12 months prior to the survey.

**“One out of every four men
who were surveyed was
released from a correctional
institution during the 12
months prior to the survey”**

Other important findings concerning the 61 men and women that were released from a correctional institution during the 12 months prior to the survey note that

- 90% were living on the streets at the time they were surveyed and 10% were living in a shelter;
- Nearly half (49%) stated that they had a mental health problem, were taking medications for mental health issues, and/or had been hospitalized for mental health issues;
- Nearly half (47%) stated that they had a drug or alcohol problem and/or were using one or more of the following drugs: Cocaine, crack, heroin, pcp/lsd, uppers/speed, and downers/tranquilizers;

- More than one-third (39%) stated that they had a chronic health condition such as diabetes, heart trouble, high blood pressure, seizures, hepatitis, respiratory problems, epilepsy, tuberculosis, or arthritis.

Additional significant findings concerning the 61 men and women in this report are provided within the context of ethnicity, gender, and age and include:

- Nearly half (46%) or 28 were African American or Black;
- Twelve (20%) of the 61 respondents were women and half (50%) or six (6) of the 12 women were Latina;
- Forty nine (80%) of the 61 respondents were men
- Among the forty nine men (49) nearly two-thirds (63%) or 31 men were 40 years of age or older;
- Among the twelve (12) women more than two-thirds (67%) or eight (8) women were under 40 years of age.

I. Background Information

The survey was administered over a four week period from January 31 through February 25, 2011. It was conducted on the streets and at various residential and nonresidential sites that provide services to homeless persons. Representatives from more than 20 public and private agencies, service providers and faith-based institutions participated in conducting survey interviews throughout the city.

The process involved administering a one-on-one interview with 292 randomly selected homeless adults living in the City of Pasadena. There were three (3) primary types of contact with homeless persons who participated in the survey. They were: 1) interviews with homeless persons who were contacted on the streets; 2) interviews with homeless persons who were contacted while living in shelters and transitional housing; and 3) interviews with homeless persons who were contacted while using non-residential homeless services.

The purpose of the survey was to compile information concerning a cross-section of several pre-determined subpopulations that also included persons released from correctional institutions during the past 12 months. Other subpopulations included chronic homeless persons, men, persons with a developmental disability, persons with a physical disability, persons with HIV/AIDS, persons with mental illness, substance abusers, veterans, victims of domestic violence, unaccompanied youth under age 18, and women.

Data for all of the subpopulations, except persons released from correctional institutions during the past 12 months, is required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for inclusion in its annual Continuum of Care Homeless Assistance Program grant application. The City of Pasadena has applied for grant funding to HUD since 1995. Thus, a primary purpose for the data collection was to prepare for the 2011 grant application.

Although data concerning persons released from correctional institutions during the past 12 months is not required in the grant application, information about such persons was desired to help determine if California's early release program, which grants low-level prisoners "non-revocable parole" and lets them out of prison before they had served their entire sentence, has contributed to an increase in the local homeless population.

Whether the early release program has increased Pasadena's homeless population is difficult to know for sure. What is known is that the City's homeless population did increase by 7% between January 2010 and January 2011 and the number of single men did increase as well—from 61% of the total homeless population in 2010 to 71% in 2011. However, data concerning the release from correctional institutions was not collected in prior years. Thus, a comparison to past years cannot be made which could have helped determine if the early release program has increased Pasadena's homeless male population. For instance, if data in past years revealed that the percentage of homeless men that were recently released from correctional institutions was significantly less than the 24% for 2011, collected evidence could support the idea that Pasadena's homeless male population did increase because of early release program.

The data collected from persons released from correctional institutions during the past 12 months was also analyzed to see whether the respondents met criteria for other subpopulations among homeless persons previously identified by HUD. As a result, this report provides a profile of the 61 survey respondents that were recently released from correctional institutions that is based on information provided through self-report that includes basic demographics and circumstances that likely contribute to their state of homelessness. Basic demographics include gender, ethnicity, and age. Contributing circumstances include chronic health issues, domestic violence, mental illness, substance abuse, and permanent disabilities. Other information such as veteran status and household status—whether they were single individuals or a member of a family—was also provided by them.

II. Findings

Basic Demographics

The following basic demographics for homeless persons released from correctional institutions in the last 12 months include gender, ethnicity, and age and noted in Table 1 below.

Gender

- 80% or 49 of the 61 respondents were men and 20% or 12 were women;

Ethnicity

- 46% or 28 were African American or Black; 23% or 14 were White; 21% or 13 were Hispanic or Latino; 8% or 6 were Other; 0% were Asian; and 0% were American Indian or Alaskan Native;

Age

- 10% or 6 were between the ages of 18 through 24; 84% or 51 were between the ages of 25 and 61; and 6% or 4 were age 62+;

Table 1: Gender, Ethnicity, and Age among homeless persons released from correctional institutions in the last 12 months

	Men		Women	
	#	%	#	%
Ethnicity:				
African American/Black	26	53	2	17
Hispanic/Latino	7	14	6	50
White	11	23	3	25
Other	5	10	1	8
Total:	49	100	12	100
Age:				
Under 18	1	2	0	0
18 – 24	4	8	2	17
25 – 39	13	27	6	50
40 – 61	28	57	4	33
62+	3	6	0	0
Total:	49	100	12	100

Other basic demographics for homeless persons released from correctional institutions as noted in Table 1 include:

- Half (53%) among African American/Black men were recently released from correctional institutions and only 17% of African American/Black women;
- Half (50%) among Hispanic/Latino women were recently released from correctional institutions and only 14% of Hispanic/Latino men;
- Nearly 25% among White men and 25% among White women were recently released from correctional institutions.

Contributing Circumstances

Contributing Circumstances is defined as conditions that likely contribute to the state of homelessness for respondents. Conditions include mental illness, substance abuse,

physical disability, developmental disability, chronic health condition, HIV/AIDS, and domestic violence.

Mental Illness

- 49% or 30 of 61 respondents had a mental health problem, were taking medications for mental health issues, and/or had been hospitalized for mental health issues;

Among the 30 respondents that had a mental health problem, were taking medications for mental health issues, and/or had been hospitalized for mental health issues, 24 or 80% were men and six or 20% were women.

Table 2: Mental Illness among homeless persons released from correctional institutions

	Men		Women	
	#	%	#	%
Ethnicity:				
African American/Black	12	50	0	0
Hispanic/Latino	4	17	3	50
White	6	25	2	33
Other	2	8	1	17
Total:	24	100	6	100
Age:				
Under 18	0	0	0	0
18 – 24	1	4	2	33.3
25 – 39	6	26	2	33.3
40 – 61	16	66	2	33.3
62+	1	4	0	0
Total:	24	100	6	100

Among the 24 men who had mental illness, half (50%) were African American/Black and nearly two-thirds (66%) were between the ages of 40 – 61.

Substance Abuse

- 47% or 29 of 61 respondents had a drug or alcohol problem and/or were using one or more of the following drugs: Cocaine, crack, heroin, pcp/lsd, uppers/speed, and downers/tranquilizers;

Among the 29 respondents that were substance abusers, 25 or 86% were men and four or 14% were women.

Table 3: Substance Abuse among homeless persons released from correctional institutions

	Men		Women	
	#	%	#	%
Ethnicity:				
African American/Black	14	56	0	0
Hispanic/Latino	3	12	2	50
White	6	24	1	25
Other	2	8	1	25
Total:	25	100	4	100
Age:				
Under 18	1	4	0	0
18 – 24	3	12	0	0
25 – 39	3	12	3	75
40 – 61	17	68	1	25
62+	1	4	0	0
Total:	25	100	4	100

Of the 25 men who were substance abusers, more than half (56%) were African American/Black and more than two-thirds (68%) were between the ages of 40 – 61.

Physical Disability

- 39% or 24 of 61 respondents had a physical disability;

Among the 24 respondents that had a physical disability, 22 or 92% were men and two or 8% were women.

Table 4: Physical Disability among persons recently released from correctional institutions

	Men		Women	
	#	%	#	%
Ethnicity:				
African American/Black	13	59	0	0
Hispanic/Latino	4	18	1	50
White	3	14	0	0
Other	2	9	1	50
Total:	22	100	2	100
Age:				
Under 18	1	4	0	0
18 – 24	2	9	0	0
25 – 39	2	9	1	50
40 – 61	14	64	1	50
62+	3	14	0	0
Total:	22	100	2	100

Among the 22 men who had a physical disability, over half (59%) were African American/Black and nearly two-thirds (64%) were between the ages of 40 – 61.

Developmental Disability

- 23% or 14 of 61 respondents had a developmental disability;

Among the 14 respondents that had a developmental disability, 13 or 93% were men and one (7%) was a women.

Table 5: Developmental Disability among homeless persons released from correctional institutions

		Men		Women	
		#	%	#	%
Ethnicity:					
	African American/Black	9	69	0	0
	Hispanic/Latino	1	8	0	0
	White	1	8	1	100
	Other	2	15	0	0
	Total:	13	100	1	100
Age:					
	Under 18	0	0	0	0
	18 – 24	0	0	0	0
	25 – 39	3	0	1	100
	40 – 61	10	77	1	0
	62+	3	23	0	0
	Total:	13	100	1	100

Among the 13 men who had a developmental disability, over two-thirds (69%) were African American/Black and more than three-fourths (77%) were between the ages of 40 - 61.

Chronic Health Condition

- 39% or 24 of 61 respondents had a chronic health condition such as diabetes, heart trouble, high blood pressure, seizures, hepatitis, respiratory problems, epilepsy, tuberculosis, or arthritis;

Among the 24 respondents that had a chronic health condition, 19 or 79% were men and five or (21%) were women.

Table 6: Chronic Health Condition among persons released from correctional institutions

	Men		Women	
	#	%	#	%
Ethnicity:				
African American/Black	9	47	1	20
Hispanic/Latino	3	16	2	40
White	5	26	1	20
Other	2	11	1	20
Total:	19	100	5	100
Age:				
Under 18	1	5	0	0
18 – 24	1	5	0	0
25 – 39	3	16	2	40
40 – 61	12	63	3	60
62+	2	11	0	0
Total:	19	100	5	100

Among the 19 men who had a chronic health condition, nearly half (47%) were African American/Black and nearly two-thirds (63%) were between the ages of 40 - 61.

HIV/AIDS

- 3% or two of 61 respondents had been diagnosed with AIDS or had tested positive for HIV;

Among the 2 respondents that had HIV/AIDS, 2 or 100% were men and 0 (0%) were women.

Table 7: HIV/AIDS among persons released from correctional institutions

	Men		Women	
	#	%	#	%
Ethnicity:				
African American/Black	1	50	0	0
Hispanic/Latino	0	0	0	0
White	0	0	0	0
Other	1	50	0	0
Total:	2	100	0	0
Age:				
Under 18	0	0	0	0
18 – 24	0	0	0	0
25 – 39	0	0	0	0
40 – 61	1	50	0	0
62+	1	50	0	0
Total:	2	100	0	0

Among the 2 men who had HIV/AIDS, one was African American/Black and the other stated Other and one was between the ages of 40 – 61 and the other 62+.

Domestic Violence

- 37% or 23 of 61 respondents had been a victim of domestic violence by an intimate partner, parent, guardian, or relative.

Among the 23 respondents that were victims of domestic violence, 15 or 65% were men and eight or (35%) were women.

Table 8: Domestic Violence among persons released from correctional institutions

	Men		Women	
	#	%	#	%
Ethnicity:				
African American/Black	10	66	1	12.5
Hispanic/Latino	1	7	4	50
White	3	20	1	12.5
Other	1	7	2	25
Total:	15	100	8	100
Age:				
Under 18	0	0	0	0
18 – 24	3	20	2	25
25 – 39	6	40	3	37.5
40 – 61	5	33	3	37.5
62+	1	7	0	0
Total:	15	100	8	100

Among the 15 men who were victims of domestic violence, nearly half (47%) were African American/Black and nearly two-thirds (63%) were between the ages of 40 - 61. Of the eight women who were victims of domestic violence, half (50%) were Hispanic/Latino.

Veteran Status

- 15% or nine of 61 respondents were a veteran;

Among the nine respondents that were veterans, 7 or 78% were men and two or (22%) were women.

Table 9: Veteran Status among persons released from correctional institutions

	Men		Women	
	#	%	#	%
Ethnicity:				
African American/Black	4	57	1	50
Hispanic/Latino	1	14	0	0
White	2	29	1	50
Other	0	0	0	0
Total:	7	100	2	100
Age:				
Under 18	0	0	0	0
18 – 24	1	14	0	0
25 – 39	0	0	2	100
40 – 61	5	72	0	0
62+	1	14	0	0
Total:	7	100	2	100

Among the seven men who were veterans, more than half (57%) were African American/Black and nearly three-fourths (72%) were between the ages of 40 - 61. Of the two women who were veterans, both (100%) were between the ages of 25 - 39.

III. Next Steps

This profile of homeless persons released from correctional institutions in the last 12 months reveals the many needs of discharged persons reentering society. This is congruent with existing literature on the needs of those released from jail or prison. Past literature has noted that incarcerated persons are likely to experience homelessness upon release, especially those who also have mental illness; furthermore, they are also more likely to have experienced at least one episode of homelessness prior to incarceration (Gouvis Roman & Travis, 2004). The rate of disabilities and chronic health conditions along with mental illness and substance abuse found in the current survey strongly suggest the need for available and accessible services such as housing as well as other supports to obtain employment as soon as possible upon release from a correctional institution.

Since the implementation of the McKinney-Vento Act, HUD expects jurisdictions and Continuums of Care that receive federal funding to properly address discharge planning. HUD requires that a jurisdiction identify specific mechanisms by which persons are not routinely discharged into homelessness, identify places or agencies where people may go upon discharge, and identify the stakeholders or agencies that ensure that people are not discharged into homelessness.

In reality, the relationship between homelessness and discharge from correctional institutions has been troubling. Often correctional institutions are required to have some form of discharge plan. Ideally, each inmate discharged into the community should have participated in some form of assessment while in custody to determine his/her likelihood to commit another crime, as well as a transition plan for when the person is released back into the community (Urban Institute, Transition from Jail to Community Toolkit, 2010).

While no one should be discharged into homelessness, in some communities there may be a disconnect between discharging institutions and community resources available to discharged persons. In fact, not all jurisdictions have agencies that can address the needs of recently released individuals in a systematic and holistic manner (Holzer, Raphael, and Stoll, 2003). Coordination of services through formal partnerships, such as between discharging institutions and reentry programs, is key and crucial to avoid gaps in services at the time of release. The Pasadena/Altadena area is fortunate to have a program where several agencies have come together along with law enforcement to coordinate a wide array of services (housing, healthcare, mental health, drug rehabilitation counseling, etc.).

These type of programs and services will be even more crucial now that the US Supreme Court has ruled in favor of the release of inmates in California prisons to ease current overcrowded conditions and as the State of California continues to release low-risk offenders early. Also, increased funding for inmate rehabilitation programs during the next few years is unlikely because of budgetary constraints, which means community-based reentry services will need to pick up the rehabilitation slack.

In order to further discover the impact of discharge from incarceration on homelessness, homeless surveys should include related questions. There are more than 400 homeless continuum of care systems across the country. Many of them conduct an annual homeless count and a related survey that asks several questions concerning age, chronic homelessness, domestic violence, health care, income, mental illness, physical disabilities, substance abuse, veteran status, and other conditions and circumstances. Others conduct a biennial count and survey.

The question—During the last 12 months, were you released from a correctional institution such as a prison or jail after serving a court-order sentence—or some similar question should be included. Questions concerning the conditions and circumstances noted above should also be included. Other questions should focus on discharge planning or the lack thereof and the actual discharge experience in terms of where and how. Others should focus on service needs.

Connecting each person who was recently released from a correctional institution should be a goal at the end of each survey. Together, these questions can serve as a basis for an intake and needs assessment that should be completed with a qualified social service worker. Another goal should be to disseminate findings to correctional institutions and those organizations whose purpose includes helping those who are recently released from a correctional institution. Collectively, all of this information should help communities reduce the numbers of persons recently discharged from correctional institutions among the homeless population.

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