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Homeless Youths in Homer: A Picture of Their Needs

André Rosay

A study of homelessness among youths in Homer, Alaska conducted by the Justice Center at University of Alaska Anchorage in 2004 has revealed that family trouble in one form or another is the usual cause behind youths first becoming homeless. While most of those who participated in the study did not remain chronically homeless, some did progress into more a severe type of homelessness, in which the prospect of returning to a family became more remote. The study identified that the needs of those who had been homeless for longer periods differed from those for whom it was a new or short-term event. The study, which the Justice Center undertook at the request of the Child Advocacy Coalition of Homer (CACH), seems to be the most extensive structured look at homelessness in Alaska yet undertaken.

The Center developed and administered a lengthy interview to eighteen Homer youths who were either currently homeless or had been homeless in the past. The interview sought information on demographic characteristics, residential history, alcohol and drug use, income, daily activities, health, legal and safety issues, other youths in Homer, and opinions regarding services. The goals of the project were to document the needs of homeless youths in Homer and to assess the extent to which these needs were being addressed.

HIGHLIGHTS INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- A review of *But They All Come Back*, which examines the problems of reintegration of offenders who have completed their sentences (page 2).
- A snapshot look at probation and parole in Alaska (page 4).
- Results of a public evaluation of Anchorage police performance (page 5).

Table 1. Reasons for Becoming Homeless

Row percentages.

Reason	Yes		No		Total
	N	%	N	%	
High cost of housing / rent	6	35.3 %	11	64.7 %	17
Unemployment / seasonal employment	5	29.4	12	70.6	17
Disability	0	0.0	17	100.0	17
Runaway	6	35.3	11	64.7	17
Health / medical costs	0	0.0	17	100.0	17
Housing eviction	2	11.8	15	88.2	17
Mental health issues	1	5.9	16	94.1	17
Too old for foster care	0	0.0	17	100.0	17
Problems with the law	2	11.8	15	88.2	17
Problems with drug / alcohol use	4	23.5	13	76.5	17
Parents are divorced	3	17.6	14	82.4	17
Parents are absent	2	11.8	15	88.2	17
Parents use drugs and alcohol	3	17.6	14	82.4	17
Parents fight / argue with each other	1	5.9	16	94.1	17
Cannot follow parental rules	5	29.4	12	70.6	17
Cannot get along with parents	10	58.8	7	41.2	17
Kicked out by parents	4	23.5	13	76.5	17
Verbal abuse	7	41.2	10	58.8	17
Physical abuse	2	11.8	15	88.2	17
Sexual abuse	0	0.0	17	100.0	17
Problems with siblings	1	5.9	16	94.1	17
Parents moved away from home	0	0.0	17	100.0	17
Death of parent / guardian	0	0.0	17	100.0	17

How Youths First became Homeless

Certain factors stood out clearly as important causes behind youths initially becoming homeless. When youths were asked what caused their homelessness, eight (47.1%) indicated family problems, six (35.3%) indicated it was their personal choice to become homeless (although these personal choices were often caused by family problems), and three (17.6%) indicated other reasons.

Detailed results are shown in Table 1. In terms of family problems, over half (58.8%) of the youths indicated that they became homeless because they could not get along with their parents. Parental problems included parental divorce, parental absence, parental use of drugs and alcohol, and

parental discord. Youths also became homeless because they did not follow parental rules and/or were kicked out by parents. Six youths (35.3%) simply ran away. Verbal abuse was mentioned as a contributor to the youths' homelessness by seven (41.2%) of the youths. Few youths (11.8%) mentioned physical abuse and none (0%) mentioned sexual abuse as causes of homelessness. Sexual abuse, however, is the least likely victimization to be reported to police, and youths might not have been willing to report it to us. Six youths (35.3%) mentioned the high cost of housing and rent and five youths (29.4%), the lack of employment opportunities. Causes mentioned less frequently included housing

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Review Essay: *But They All Come Back*

John Riley

But They All Come Back: Facing the Challenges of Prisoner Reentry

By Jeremy Travis

Washington, DC: Urban Institute Press, 2002. 420 pages.

America's correctional programs are costly and notoriously ineffective. With what is by far the highest incarceration rate in any of the world's developed nations, America nevertheless continues to experience high crime rates. Virtually all experts on the criminal justice system agree that a substantial portion of America's crime problem and much of the cost of incarceration may be explained by the recidivism of recently released offenders. Research published by the Bureau of Justice Statistics suggests that almost half of those we release from prison have been in prison

before. High rates of recidivism reflect both a substantial number of new crimes committed by recently released prisoners as well as many technical violations of parole conditions. According to Jeremy Travis, in recent years we have been incarcerating about as many people for parole violations as we imprisoned for all reasons in 1980. With both technical violations and new offenses, the failure to make a successful transition to life in the community often means another expensive and often unproductive stay in a state or federal prison.

In *But They All Come Back*, released this year, Travis argues that our current collective unwillingness to take responsibility for the consequences of mass incarceration must be understood as one cause of America's continuing crime problem. Through neglect, and a quarter century's worth of bankrupt, conservative crime policies, we are manufacturing the conditions for recidivism and virtually guaranteeing high levels of crime and incarceration well into the foreseeable future. Instead of trying to reintegrate offenders and assure their post-release success, we have consciously worked to limit their legitimate opportunities and to undermine genuine efforts at reform.

Moreover, the costs of incarceration are not limited to those usually associated with prison budgets. Other costs imposed on families and communities by the incarceration of their members are equally important if far more difficult to measure and address. These costs and a series of policy proposals intended for the better delivery of criminal justice services form the subject of *But They All Come Back*. Travis is well known for his work on crime and punishment, and especially for his recent contributions in the field of prisoner reentry. Those who are familiar with his work will appreciate this opportunity to consider his most recent thinking on reentry issues. Those who are as yet unacquainted with his work may be surprised by the scope of his concerns and the far-reaching implications of his analysis. *But They All Come Back* will provide readers with a concise introduction to some of the major policy issues in the field of criminal justice while also moving beyond the narrow institutional concerns that sometimes limit work in this area.

According to Travis, the impact of America's imprisonment binge goes way beyond prison or even criminal justice system expenditures, raising critical issues of social justice:

Our experiment in mass incarceration has had a significant impact on the children, families, and communities of those we send to prison. We have weakened our democracy by denying millions of citizens the right to vote, undermined our pursuit of racial justice by incarceration policies with racially disparate outcomes, and created a society in which the stigma of a criminal conviction consigns large numbers of its members to a life at the margin.

This new book is an examination of the consequences of mass imprisonment and the challenge of prisoner reentry — not just for the actors and institutions of the criminal justice system, but for the larger society in which crime and justice issues emerge.

But They All Come Back is written in three parts. Part One describes the current state of punishment in America. It offers a concise discussion of the evolution of American sentencing policy, focusing on the development and decline of indeterminate sentencing and the rise of the determinate sentencing practices that now play such a prominent role in America. (Indeterminate sentencing structures allowed a judge wide discretion to tailor individual sentences. Determinate policies impose a predetermined sentence for a specific type of crime. Alaska currently uses a determinate sentencing structure for most felony offenses and some misdemeanors.) The movement from indeterminate sentencing policies, which were intended to complement an emphasis on rehabilitation, to today's determinate sentencing policies, which limit the extent to which sentences can be shortened to reward or reinforce rehabilitation efforts, has been a major factor in America's "new penology." It is a penology that emphasizes the punishment and social exclusion of the offender over concerns for the inmate's eventual reentry and reintegration into the community.

Part One also offers a valuable account of the rise of what Travis has called "invisible punishments"—that web of additional post-conviction legal restrictions that continues to haunt convicted felons long after their sentences have been served. Invisible punishments include laws that limit voting, occupational entry, and access to things like public housing and school loans for those who have been convicted of felonies. We are now only beginning to understand the ways in which these invisible punishments



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Editor: Antonia Moras
Editorial Board: Allan Barnes, Sharon Chamard,
Ron Everett, Pamela Kelley, Robert
Langworthy, Alan McKelvie, Brad Myrstell,
Deborah Periman, John Riley, André Rosay,
Lawrence Trostle, Darryl Wood
Typesetting and Layout: Melissa Green

Justice Center, Robert Langworthy, Director

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Justice Center
University of Alaska Anchorage
3211 Providence Drive
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(907) 786-1810
(907) 786-7777 fax
ayjust@uaa.alaska.edu
<http://www.uaa.alaska.edu/just/>

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limit the rehabilitation and reentry of offenders.

Part Two of *But They All Come Back* describes the social policy challenges facing those working to promote successful reentry and reintegration of the approximately 630,000 men and women released from American prisons each year. The chapters focus on seven distinct policy domains: public safety, the family, work, public health, housing, civic identity, and community. Prisoner reentry inevitably involves all of these domains, with clear implications for all working in the field of human services. Current criminal justice policies often undermine reentry. Travis shows how better coordination among policy experts and service providers in these areas could increase the efficiency and effectiveness of programs, eventually reducing costs and improving outcomes across this very broad spectrum of policy areas.

In Part Three, Travis outlines an agenda for those who want to make successful reintegration of former prisoners a priority in contemporary America. He describes five principles of effective reentry that reformers can use to guide current practices. Cognizant of current political realities, Travis offers suggestions that may be implemented without a major political realignment or any legislative changes. Hoping for more, he outlines an ambitious series of legislative initiatives—a plan consistent with an aggressive commitment to reducing crime by reducing recidivism.

Among the author's suggestions are two proposals that could play a central role in reforming a criminal justice system clearly in need of change. Travis suggests that we organize reentry courts and establish entities he refers to as community justice corporations. Reentry courts are similar in conception to the drug courts that are now appearing throughout the country to address the legal and social problems associated with drug addiction. With some already functioning experimentally in several jurisdictions, reentry courts are intended to have the primary responsibility for the supervision of recently released felons. The reentry court oversees the rehabilitation as well as the punishment of the offender, with a judge assuming some of the responsibilities currently assigned to parole agents—with the judicial power to order sanctions for an offender's lapses as well as mandate court-supported rewards, such as shorter sentences and release from the collateral civil liabilities associated with felony conviction. By ordering short periods of incarceration or by reinstating limited driving privileges, for

example, reentry court judges working with newly released offenders would be able to punish them for misconduct or reward them for the kind of behavior we associate with successful reintegration into the community.

Community justice corporations, which would work closely with reentry courts, would be a mechanism for "grass roots" oversight of the reentry process, emphasizing local knowledge and local control. They would function as a kind of "justice intermediary," standing between the community and the criminal justice system. Travis believes that community justice corporations could be organized either as public agencies or as private nonprofit organizations. They would represent the criminal justice system but function at the level of the local community rather than as state or national bodies. Through what Travis refers to as a devolution of responsibility from the state to the local community, those most in touch with the realities of particular neighborhoods would be responsible for coordinating the many activities that make reintegration possible.

There is much more to recommend in *But They All Come Back*. The collateral costs of incarceration have only recently begun to receive the attention they deserve. Travis draws on the emerging literature in this area in a way that will inform and no doubt surprise many readers. He offers a statistical portrait of crime and the problem of reintegration that is clear, concise, and compelling. His thinking reflects a scholar's understanding of the most recent empirical research on reentry issues, coupled with respect for the experience of corrections and rehabilitation professionals. In a field where serious discussion all too often becomes mired in questionable statistical abstractions, Travis has taken pains to ground the discussion in concrete case studies and accounts of actual programs that have delivered services in cities across America. Moreover, while his suggestions for reform are certainly far-reaching, they are not as radical as some reform proposals we have seen in Washington in recent years.

Many Americans, including the current president, have already expressed a commitment to improving opportunities for prisoner reentry. Those who take the time to read *But They All Come Back* will certainly understand why this issue is generating discussion. Even so, it remains to be seen if those who are committed to making America "the land of the second chance" will be able to win the broad public support necessary to go beyond discussion and move from a failed policy reflecting

short-term political expediency to an energetic and successful reengineering of the American criminal justice system. Real courage, and a willingness to acknowledge past mistakes, will be required if we are to reduce recidivism and promote the successful reentry of those who have completed prison sentences. It appears that these are commodities in short supply today, particularly among those best positioned to influence public policies on reentry. Travis has outlined one of the great public policy challenges of our time, a challenge that offers America potential rewards that could far exceed the costs of a practical solution. Even so, the immediate risks to politicians who support effective reentry programs are substantial. Those who look to Washington for effective leadership on this issue, at least in the near future, will almost certainly be disappointed. This is a challenge that might be most effectively met on the state and local level, by those who face the consequences of failed sentencing policies and correctional programs on a daily basis. One can only hope that those who do not have the vision or the courage to join them will have the good sense to get out of the way.

John Riley is an associate professor with the Justice Center.

Center Conducts Network and Spatial Analysis Seminar

Twelve researchers from the University of Alaska Anchorage and Simon Fraser University in British Columbia participated in a July 2005 seminar devoted to integrating network and spatial analysis. Inga Carboni of Boston College and George Tita from the University of California at Irvine conducted the workshop under the sponsorship of the Justice Center at the University of Alaska Anchorage.

Participants gained facility with the network analysis software UCINET and also worked with GeoDA and SpaceStat, which are spatial regression software packages. The seminar content will inform at least five participant research projects. A special issue of *Western Criminology Review* containing contributions based on the workshop may be published.

Among those attending were UAA researchers from the Justice Center, and the Departments of Sociology, Psychology, and Biology.

Probation and Parole in Alaska: A Snapshot

The table, map and figure on this page provide an overview of the current numerical and geographical scope of probation and parole in Alaska. As the table and figure indicate, the number of offenders on probation more than doubled from 1995 to 2003, and the rate per 100,000 in the general Alaska population increased by over 91 percent. Similarly, the number of offenders on parole doubled, and the rate per 100,000 population increased by 83 percent. The figures presented in Table 1 and Figure 1 were compiled by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), as reported by the Alaska Department of Corrections.

As reported by BJS, the Alaska rates of increase in the probation and parole population since 1995 have been much higher than the national rates. From 1995 through 2003, the national total of offenders on probation increased from 3,077,861 to 4,073,987—a rise of 32 percent. The nationwide parole population rose from 679,421 to 774,558—an increase of 14 percent.

Despite the much steeper increases in the Alaska probation and parole populations, the rates of offenders on probation or parole per 100,000 in the general population, remained lower than the nationwide rates at the end of 2003. Alaska's rate of offenders on probation was 1,185; the nationwide rate was 1,876. The Alaska rate for offenders on parole was 203; the national was 357.

Also—according to figures from the Department of Corrections, at the end of June 2005, of the 3065 convicted offenders in custody, 775 were in custody on a probation or parole violation, with 575 of these also having a new convicted offense.

Figure 1. Alaska Department of Corrections Probation Offices and Correctional Facilities

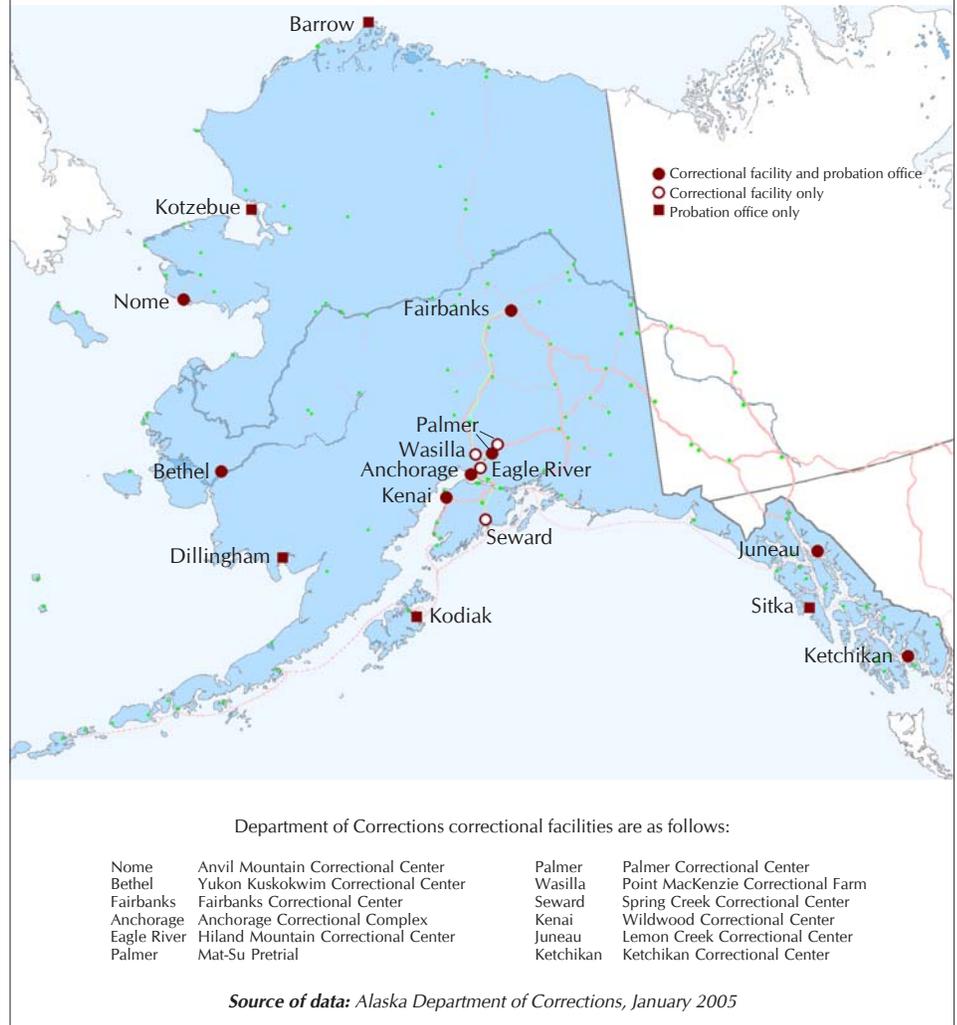
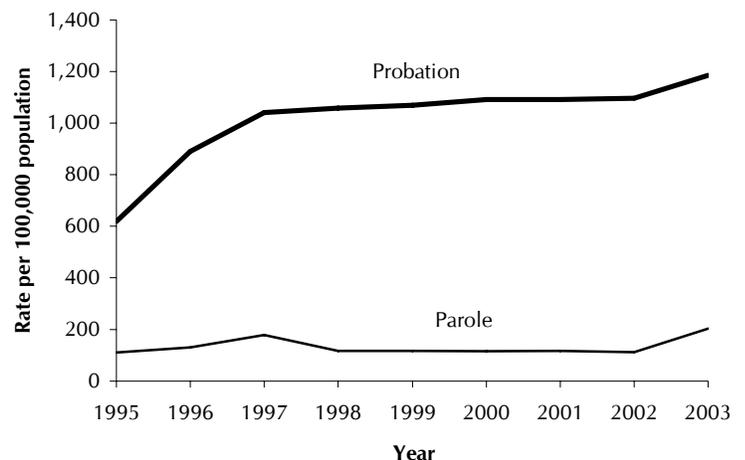


Table 1. Probation and Parole Populations in Alaska, 1995–2003

	Probation		Parole	
	Number on probation on 12/31	Rate per 100,000 population	Number on parole on 12/31	Rate per 100,000 population
1995	2,563	619	459	111
1996	3,760	890	553	131
1997	4,378	1,040	752	179
1998	4,456	1,057	492	117
1999	4,517	1,069	493	117
2000	4,760	1,091	507	116
2001	4,855	1,091	522	117
2002	4,949	1,095	508	112
2003	5,406	1,185	927	203

Source of data: Bureau of Justice Statistics

Figure 2. Probation and Parole Rates in Alaska, 1995–2003



Source of data: Bureau of Justice Statistics

Making the Grade?

Public Evaluation of Police Performance in Anchorage

Brad Myrstol

Since the mid-1980s the idea of community-oriented policing has captured the imaginations of police administrators and ordinary Americans alike. For some perspective on how far reaching community-oriented policing has become, consider data collected as part of the Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics (LEMAS) program. According to a survey of over 3,000 state and local law enforcement agencies conducted in 2000, over 60 percent of all local police and sheriffs departments employed full-time sworn officers whose primary responsibility was community policing activities. In Alaska, a total of 98 different agencies and organizations have been granted in excess of \$41 million in federal Community-Oriented Policing Service (COPS) monies (see prior *Forum* articles for various discussions of community policing in Alaska).

A driving force behind the community policing movement is a desire to reduce the level of alienation between police and citizens and the lack of police accountability, both believed to have been by-products of the professional model of policing that came to prominence in the Progressive Era of the early twentieth century. While the professional model of policing comprises many characteristics, a distinguishing feature—perhaps *the* distinguishing feature—is the explicit separation of the police from the public. As an orienting philosophy, the professional model's deliberate construction of a boundary between the police and the public derives

from the concerns of Progressive Era reformers about machine politics and systemic corruption among police and other government entities. Officers were given jobs based on political patronage, with hiring decisions based on an officer's political or ideological allegiance. To overcome this political corruption, reformers instituted the civil service system in which employment decisions were to be based upon objective standards and merit rather than the political affiliation of an applicant or the individual whim of a supervisor.

An unintended, and ironic, consequence of the professional model was a dramatic reduction in police accountability, since police—now protected by civil service provisions—could operate relatively free from citizen oversight and control. Technological innovations, especially the advent of the automobile, and the rise of a management culture—specifically, the adoption of business management models stressing efficiency—have only exacerbated police-public alienation as police have been encouraged to adopt a reactive rather than proactive posture and thus withdraw even further from the public sphere into patrol cars and specialized units. Instead of getting to know members of the public and learning of problems through impromptu and informal interactions, officers gain knowledge through responding to calls for service, which tend to be negative encounters, or by glancing through the windows of a cruiser.

To address this police-public alienation and restore lost institutional legitimacy, scholars and police administrators alike have

advanced a community-oriented approach that serves to make the boundary erected between police and the public more permeable, though not completely porous, since police in most jurisdictions are still considered civil servants. At the heart of the community policing paradigm is a commitment to increased police-public interaction and accountability to the public.

For nearly a decade, the Anchorage Police Department has engaged in a variety of activities falling under the rubric of community policing. Most notable among these efforts have been the Community Action Policing Team project implemented in the Mountain View community council area in the mid-1990s and the Cops in Schools program. The department's commitment to the underlying philosophy of community-oriented policing can also be seen in less public, non-operational ways—for example, in the way it has actively sought community feedback on its performance and in its efforts to seed an organizational culture sensitive to the needs and desires of a growing and increasingly diverse city. One element identified in the department's strategic plan formulated after an internal review in 2003 was the need to improve public perception of the department.

Recognizing the need for reliable data with which to determine the public's perceptions of the performance of APD, the Justice Center at the University of Alaska Anchorage dedicated an entire section of its *Anchorage Community Survey, 2005* to em-

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Alaska Justice Forum Articles on Policing in Alaska

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Table 1. Survey Results: Public Evaluation of Police Performance in Anchorage

Range of scores for all six police performance measures were:
1 = Excellent; 2 = Pretty good; 3 = Average; 4 = Poor.

	Valid responses	Average rating	Excellent (1)	Pretty good (2)	Average (3)	Poor (4)	
Response time	2,277	2.24	20.2 %	44.6 %	36.0 %	9.2 %	
Use of force	1,943	2.10	23.2	49.4	22.0	5.5	
Helpfulness	2,335	1.93	34.9	42.6	17.3	5.1	
Fairness	2,272	2.13	23.6	46.5	23.7	6.3	
Solving crime	2,139	2.41	12.6	44.1	32.6	10.7	
Prevent crime	2,146	2.68	6.4	35.9	41.1	16.6	
	Valid responses	Average rating	Very accessible (1)	Somewhat accessible (2)	Somewhat inaccessible (3)	Not at all accessible (4)	
Access to APD	2,332	1.77	36.7 %	51.9 %	9.0 %	2.4 %	
	Valid responses	Average rating	A great deal (1)	Quite a lot (2)	Some (3)	Very little (4)	None (5)
Confidence in APD	2,396	2.33	24.6 %	37.7 %	29.8 %	5.6 %	2.3 %
	Valid responses	Average rating	No (0)	Yes (1)			
Direct contact	2,411	0.48	52.2 %	47.8 %			
Competent	1,144	0.87	13.4	86.6			
Indirect contact	2,375	0.43	56.7	43.3			

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(continued from page 5)

empirically measuring residents' evaluation of APD's performance. Included in the Anchorage Community Survey were eleven items relating to perceptions and experiences with APD. Six of these items asked residents to rate APD on the following dimensions of performance:

- Responding quickly to calls for help or assistance;
- Not using excessive force;
- Being helpful and friendly;
- Treating people fairly;
- Investigating and/or solving crimes; and
- Preventing crime.

Respondents were also asked how much confidence they had in the department as well as how accessible they felt the department to be.

In order to gauge the extent to which personal experience with the police influences individual attitudes towards them, the *Anchorage Community Survey* also included items measuring both direct and indirect experiences with APD officers:

- Direct: "Have you, yourself, come into contact with an Anchorage police officer for any reason in the past 12 months?"; and

- Indirect: "Has anyone you know well, such as a family member or close friend, come into contact with an Anchorage police officer for any reason in the past 12 months?"

Finally, those who indicated having come into direct contact with an Anchorage police officer were asked to evaluate that experience:

- "Thinking about your most recent experience with an APD officer, would you, yourself, characterize the officer's behavior as competent? By 'competent' I mean the officer handled things in a manner you thought was appropriate for the situation?"

The first question addressed in this article is: *How do Anchorage residents perceive the Anchorage police department's performance?* Percent distributions and mean scores for each item are presented in Table 1. These results show that, in general, Anchorage residents have a positive view of Anchorage police performance. This finding corresponds to an extensive research literature on public perceptions of the police which shows that the police enjoy widespread support among the general population. It also squares with previous Justice Center research examining public attitudes toward APD (see "A Further Perspective on Satisfaction with Policing" by Matthew

Giblin in the Fall 2003 *Forum*).

Officer helpfulness and friendliness garnered the best rating (1.93), followed by their use of force (2.10), the fairness with which they treat people (2.13), and response time (2.24).

Ratings of police performance with regard to crime-control activities were lower, however. Only a slight majority of respondents rated APD as "excellent" or "pretty good" for investigating and/or solving crimes (average rating = 2.41), and a minority of respondents gave APD's crime prevention a favorable rating (average score = 2.68).

In terms of access, nearly all respondents (88.6%; average rating = 1.77) reported that they felt APD was more accessible than not, with more than one-third stating

that the services of APD were "very accessible" to them. For the final assessment of APD performance, respondents were asked how much confidence they had in the Anchorage Police Department. Just over 60 percent of those who responded had "a great deal" or "quite a lot" of confidence, while more than a third stated they had only "some," "very little," or no confidence in APD.

When asked about their experiences with APD, better than six out of ten respondents reported that they had had personal experience with an APD officer in the 12 months preceding their participation in the survey (47.8% direct experience; 43.3% indirect experience). The direct experience figure corresponds almost exactly with previous Justice Center research, which reported a figure of 49.3 percent. Thus, it would appear that contact with an APD officer is not uncommon for Anchorage residents.

To summarize, the answer to the first question—*How do Anchorage residents perceive the Anchorage police department's performance?*—is, in the most general of terms, "positively."

We now move on to our next question: *Do the ratings provided by Anchorage residents vary significantly according to the characteristics of respondents?*

The answer to this question is a bit more complicated. In order to simplify the presentation of findings somewhat, this part of the analysis is limited to the first six APD

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ferences for 2 of 6 performance measures); and *household income* (significant differences for 2 of 6 performance measures).

The APD performance measures inducing the greatest variation across respondents were, again in descending order: treating people fairly; helpfulness and friendliness; use of force; response time; investigating/solving crimes; and finally, crime prevention.

More detailed analyses show that these significant differences were very specific in nature. For example, it was not simply that work status mattered, but that it mattered in very particular ways. Understanding these particulars is critical to our understanding of citizens' perceptions of police (and presumably other legal institutions as well). So our next question is how, precisely, did each of the demographic variables matter?

Age. Our analyses revealed that the most consistent differences in respondents' evaluations of police performance existed between those aged 65 and over and everyone else. Furthermore, while senior citizens differentiated themselves from those in all other age groups, the largest gap was found between them and respondents in the 18-24 age group. Another pattern detected in the data was that in no case did an older group offer a more negative evaluation of the police than a younger age group; that is, evaluations of police performance were monotonic—without exception, they got better as respondents got older.

Race/ethnicity. The statistically significant differences found between racial/ethnic categories were limited to White/Caucasian–Alaska Native/American Indian and White/Caucasian–Black/African American contrasts. In all cases, where significant differences were found, respondents who reported their race/ethnicity as White/Caucasian provided a significantly more favorable evaluation of APD performance than their Alaska Native/American Indian and Black/African American counterparts. With respect to the White/Caucasian–Alaska Native/American Indian contrast, significant differences existed for evaluations of *response time*, *use of force*, *helpfulness/friendliness*, and *treating people fairly*. Significant differences for the White/Caucasian–Black/African American were limited to respondent evaluations of *use of force* and *treating people fairly*.

Educational attainment. The effects of formal education on evaluations of police performance were more mixed than for many of the other demographic comparisons. In general, however, it can be said that respondents with more formal education offered

more favorable views of police performance. In particular, those with advanced educations—graduate or professional degrees—consistently gave more favorable opinions of APD's work. Those with associate's degrees, however, tended to be more critical than both those with less education and those with more. An acute difference was seen when those with associate's degrees were compared with those with a bachelor's degree or higher.

Current work status. Most powerful among all the demographic factors examined was a respondent's current work status. This was the only demographic characteristic that displayed significant between-group variation for every performance measure. At the heart of these differences was whether or not a respondent was retired. Retirees were found to exhibit dramatically different views of APD's performance than all other work categorizations. The direction of these differences was such that retirees always provided a more positive evaluation—regardless of the performance measure. Other group differences did emerge, however. In particular, differences were detected between those respondents who reported being in the work force (both employed and unemployed) and those who were not in the work force (i.e., homemakers and full-time students). Thus, three distinct work status categories emerged with respect to the evaluation of police performance: those currently in the work force; those retired from the work force; and those who were not currently in the work force.

Household income. In general, household income was found to demonstrate little variation for the evaluation of the Anchorage police department. The only two statistically significant differences detected

existed between the same two groups—those whose households earned between \$25,000–\$49,999 and those with reported household incomes of \$80,000 or more. Both differences were for *use of force* and *treating people fairly*.

Household size. Statistically significant differences between household size categories existed for three police performance measures: *response time*; *helpfulness*; and *crime prevention*. All of the statistically significant differences found were between *single resident* households and those with *5 or 6 residents*.

Residential tenure. Whether or not a respondent had lived in the current residence for 5 years before the survey was found to demonstrate only marginal variation in evaluations of APD performance. Differences between those who had lived in their residence for at least 5 years and those who had lived in their residence for less than five years existed for only two performance measures: *helpfulness/friendliness* and *treating people fairly*. In both instances, those who reported living in their current residence for at least five years provided significantly more favorable evaluations of APD.

Gender. While respondent's gender was found to have a strong influence on evaluations of police performance, the gender differences found did not indicate a clear gender gap in evaluations of police performance. It was not the case that women consistently offered more favorable evaluations of Anchorage police than men, or vice versa; rather, gender appeared to influence evaluations of police in very specific ways. Women offered more favorable evaluations with respect to: *helpfulness/friendliness* and *investigating/solving crimes*; they provided more negative evaluations than men for: *use of*

Table 3. Statistical Significance of Between-Group Differences (ANOVA), by Respondent Demographic Characteristics

Demographic characteristics found to be significant predictors of respondent evaluations of Anchorage Police Department are marked with asterisks denoting their level of statistical significance (more asterisks = greater significance).

	Response	Force	Friendly	Fairness	Investigate	Prevent
Age	***		***	***	***	***
Race	***	***	***	***	*	
Hispanic background/origin			*	***		
Gender		**	**	*	***	*
Educational attainment	***	***	***	***	**	
Current work status	***	***	***	***	***	***
Residential tenure			***	**		
Household size	*		*			*
Household income		**		**		

* $p < .10$ (marginally significant differences detected between variable categories).

** $p < .05$ (significant differences detected between variable categories).

*** $p < .01$ (highly significant differences detected between variable categories).

force; treating people fairly; and preventing crime.

Hispanic origin/background. A person's Hispanic background or origin produced only two significant differences in evaluations of APD's work performance. As a group, Hispanic respondents reported lower ratings of APD with respect to *helpfulness/friendliness* and *treating people fairly* than did non-Hispanics.

To summarize the analysis to this point, the pattern of responses observed in these data was shaped at least in part by the demographic characteristics of those who par-

ticipated in the study. Notably, the influence of these individual-level characteristics was not uniform: some factors appeared to be consistently influential, while others seemed to have little bearing on citizen evaluations of police performance.

Up to this point, the variation attributable to each of these demographic factors has been detected only when each of them was examined in isolation from all others. But, of course, we know that in the real world individuals bring their entire biography into social situations, including social science interviews. While it seems obvious, it is

important to remember that people are more than any single categorization—not simply “Alaska Native/American Indian” or “female” or “between the ages of 25 and 34.” To understand the relative impact of each demographic factor on evaluations of police performance, it is important to examine each of them within the context of all the others.

In order to get a better assessment of the relative significance of each demographic factor, an ordinary least-squares regression (OLS) was used. The goal was to predict

*Please see **Police Performance**, page 10*

Table 4. OLS Regression Results

Demographic characteristics found to be significant predictors of respondent evaluations of Anchorage Police Department are marked with asterisks denoting their level of statistical significance (more asterisks = greater significance). Because of the way the performance measures were coded (1=excellent; 2=pretty good; 3=average; 4=poor), a negative coefficient indicates a more positive evaluation of police performance.

	Response (1)	Force (2)	Friendly (3)	Fairness (4)	Investigate (5)	Prevent (6)
Age						
18–24 †	—	—	—	—	—	—
25–34	.023	.007	.202 ***	.222 ***	.000	.043
35–64	-.045	-.001	.016	.011	-.013	-.015
65+	-.171 **	.011	-.039	-.029	-.009	-.058
Race						
White/Caucasian (only)	-.127 **	-.147 ***	-.216 ***	-.197 ***	-.159 ***	-.031
Non-white †	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hispanic background/origin						
Yes	-.042	-.037	-.011	.004	.002	-.005
No †	—	—	—	—	—	—
Gender						
Female †	—	—	—	—	—	—
Male	-.003	-.074	.080 **	-.042	.089 **	.108 ***
Educational attainment						
Less than associate's degree †	—	—	—	—	—	—
Associate's degree	.246 ***	.028	.044	.037	.233 ***	.040
Bachelor's degree or higher	-.043	-.155 ***	-.137 ***	-.126 ***	-.027	-.091 **
Current work status						
In work force	.026	-.003	.011	.022	.027	-.012
Retired	-.252 ***	-.150 ***	-.220 ***	-.204 ***	-.169 ***	-.237 ***
Not in work force †	—	—	—	—	—	—
Residential tenure						
Same residence as 5 years ago	.025	.100 **	-.018	-.001	.035	.007
Not same residence as 5 years ago †	—	—	—	—	—	—
Household size						
Single resident	-.014	-.007	-.040	-.018	-.037	-.125 **
2–4 residents	.001	.009	.008	-.007	.011	-.019
5 or more residents †	—	—	—	—	—	—
Household income						
Less than \$15,000 †	—	—	—	—	—	—
\$15,000–\$49,999	-.006	.003	-.001	.037	-.004	-.010
\$50,000–\$79,999	.010	-.023	.007	-.001	-.012	.023
\$80,000 or more	-.015	-.109 **	-.017	-.039	.003	-.033

* $p < .10$ (marginally significant differences detected between variable categories).

** $p < .05$ (significant differences detected between variable categories).

*** $p < .01$ (highly significant differences detected between variable categories).

† reference category.

Police Performance

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the values of the six measures of APD performance. The impact of each demographic variable on respondent evaluations of police performance was examined while controlling for (i.e., holding constant) the impact of all the others.

The OLS analyses revealed three demographic characteristics to be consistent predictors of public evaluations of police performance: work status; educational attainment; and race/ethnicity. As with the bi-variate analyses reported earlier, current work status was the most consistent and powerful predictor of evaluation of police performance. The effect of work status was quite specific—retirees were significantly more likely than those in other categories to render a positive evaluation of APD job performance.

Respondents' educational attainment was also found to be a highly significant predictor of their evaluations, though the specific effects of education varied more than for current work status. Those with at least a bachelor's degree were more likely than those with less formal education to give a positive evaluation of APD performance for four of the six measures: *use of force*; *helpfulness and friendliness*; *treating people fairly*; and *crime prevention*. In contrast, respondents with an associate's degree were more likely than those with more education, as well as those with less education, to provide a more negative evaluation of police performance for response time and investigative activities.

The third demographic characteristic found to demonstrate consistent predictive utility for the public evaluation of police performance was race/ethnicity: whether a person was White/Caucasian was significant in predicting the evaluation of APD's performance. Specifically, those respondents who reported their race/ethnicity as White or Caucasian were significantly more likely than non-Whites to offer a more positive evaluation for five of the six dimensions examined. (Race was not a significant factor for evaluations of crime prevention activities.)

Two demographic variables were found to have inconsistent effects. Age and gender were each found to influence respondents' evaluations of police performance for three of the six measures examined. Age influenced public perceptions of *response time*; *helpfulness and friendliness*; and *treating people fairly*. Respondents aged 65 and older were significantly more likely to offer a positive evaluation of APD's response time than those younger, while those in the 25-

to-34 age group offered more negative views of police helpfulness and friendliness and fairness than those in other age groups. Holding all other demographic categories constant, significant differences emerged between men and women on helpfulness and friendliness, investigative activities and crime prevention; men offered more negative evaluations than women for all three measures.

Three variables had significant predictive power for only one performance measure. The length of time a person had lived in the current residence was significant for determining public perceptions for police use of force. When other demographic characteristics were taken into account, whether or not a person had lived in the current residence 5 years preceding the survey was found to be a significant predictor of their evaluation of police use of force. Specifically, those who had lived in their current residence for at least 5 years were more likely to give a negative evaluation. With respect to household size, single residents were more likely to offer a positive evaluation of police crime prevention activities than larger households. Household income was also found to be significant for only one performance measure. A respondent's household income was a significant predictor of evaluation of police use of force. In particular, those who reported a household income of at least \$80,000 were more likely than those whose households earned less to provide a positive evaluation.

The final demographic characteristic was Hispanic background/origin. This factor was not found to be a significant predictor of public evaluations of police performance—for any measure.

To summarize this section, the most powerful predictors of Anchorage residents' evaluations of police performance were whether a respondent:

- Was retired;
- Had attained a bachelor's or graduate degree; and
- Was White/Caucasian.

Other factors found to be significant were:

- Age; and
- Gender.

Demographic characteristics found to have little or no predictive power were:

- Hispanic background/origin;
- Residential tenure;
- Household size; and
- Annual household income.

I began this article with a brief overview of community policing. The gist of that discussion was that at the heart of the commu-

nity policing movement is a commitment on the part of police organizations to reintegrate themselves with the communities they police and of which they are members themselves. A big part of the effort at reintegration is to increase departments' accountability. One way for a department to do this is to ask residents for feedback on the job it is doing. Sometimes the results provide departments and their officers a nice pat on the back, and sometimes public feedback gives police agencies a clear indication of what aspects of performance need improvement.

The data presented in this article do both of these things. It is clear that in general Anchorage residents are supportive of the job APD is doing with respect to responding quickly to calls for service, not using excessive force, being helpful and friendly, treating people fairly, investigating/solving crimes, and preventing crime. However, these data also clearly show that residents' evaluations of their police department are contingent; there is not a consensus of views. That there is substantial variation in opinion according to a person's demographic and social characteristics affords APD the opportunity to identify not only those who feel well-served by the department, but also to take note of those who reveal some disconnectedness from it.

Brad Myrston is a research associate with the Justice Center.

Justice Center Signs New Research Agreement

The Justice Center at the University of Alaska Anchorage has joined an international network of research institutes with interests in urban studies, criminology and evidence-based government decision-making. The affiliation was formalized in a memorandum of agreement between the Center and the Institute for Canadian Urban Research Studies at Simon Fraser University. Other universities and institutes in the network include: University College London, Northeastern University, University of Western Australia, Texas State University, Bowling Green State University, University of Arkansas—Little Rock, Mount Royal College in Calgary, and University College of the Fraser Valley.

The network facilitates cooperation among its members on large-scale projects and proposals as well as the sharing of methodologies, techniques and ideas. It will also permit staff and student exchange programs.

Homeless youths

(continued from page 1)

eviction, mental health issues, problems with the law, and problems with siblings.

Overall, it was clear that many youths had become homeless in the first place because of problems at home, mostly caused by verbal abuse and an inability or unwillingness to follow parental rules. Although some youths indicated that they became homeless by choice, these choices clearly resulted from problems at home. For these, family counseling was therefore the most important service in avoiding homelessness.

How Some Youths Remained Homeless

Perhaps not surprisingly, the need for family counseling became less noted as homelessness became more severe. Certain youths had progressively distanced themselves from their families to the point where returning home was no longer a reasonable possibility. At that point, family counseling was needed less than employment assistance. Among the youths that we surveyed, lack of employment was the most significant barrier to acquiring permanent housing once returning home was no longer an option. Detailed results are shown in Table 2.

When it was no longer possible to return home, many youths remained homeless because they could not obtain their own housing. As reasons for remaining homeless, six youths (37.5%) identified housing affordability, four youths (25.0%) identified housing availability, two youths (12.5%) identified moving costs, three youths (18.8%) identified transportation costs, five youths (31.3%) indicated they were too young to sign a lease, and four youths (25.0%) indicated they had no rental references.

The problem of housing in Homer may be less one of availability than one of affordability. In general, the housing picture in Homer differs from that of the state as a whole: residents seem to spend a much higher portion of their income on housing. There were 92.5 percent more renter-occupied units costing less than \$300 per month in Homer than in Alaska as a whole, but the median household income in Homer was 20.4 percent lower than in the state as a whole, and the percentage of households spending 35 percent or more of their income on housing was much higher in Homer than elsewhere in the state—that is, in Homer there are more people with low incomes who must spend a larger portion of their incomes on housing. While Homer appears to have a number of low-cost housing options when viewed from the perspective of the state as a

Table 2. Reasons for Remaining Homeless

Row percentages.

Reason	Yes		No		Total
	N	%	N	%	
Lack of employment	5	31.3 %	11	68.8 %	16
Cannot afford housing	6	37.5	10	62.5	16
Lack of housing	4	25.0	12	75.0	16
Moving costs	2	12.5	14	87.5	16
Transportation	3	18.8	13	81.3	16
Bad credit	0	0.0	16	100.0	16
Eviction	0	0.0	16	100.0	16
Criminal record	0	0.0	16	100.0	16
Too young to sign a lease	5	31.3	11	68.8	16
No rental reference	4	25.0	12	75.0	16
Lack of interest / motivation	4	25.0	12	75.0	16

whole, these may still be too costly for Homer families with low incomes—and for homeless youth.

An adequate income is necessary to gain access to housing, for homeless youths as well as everyone else. Five youths (31.3%) indicated that they remained homeless because they lacked employment.

The inaccessibility of housing, therefore, was not caused by housing availability but by affordability. Youths lacked the employment that was necessary to pay for housing. We can conclude that employment assistance was the most important service needed to avoid remaining chronically homeless.

Needs

In addition to the need for family counseling and employment assistance discussed above, homeless youths also expressed a need for drug and alcohol programming and recreational opportunities.

All but two youths (88.2%) had used alcohol in the past, all but three youths (83.3%) had used cigarettes, and all but two youths (88.2%) had used marijuana. The majority of youths (85.7% and 86.7% respectively) started using alcohol and marijuana before becoming homeless. Although a majority reported using alcohol both within the last year and within the last month, none reported daily use. Most (80.0%), however, reported daily use of cigarettes and 38.9 percent reported daily use of marijuana. Of the 18 youths, 11 (61.1%) also reported using other drugs. Although other drug use was common, it was clearly more experimental than the use of alcohol, cigarettes, and marijuana. Overall, 7 (38.9%) of the 18 homeless youths felt that they had used alcohol or drugs in ways that had negatively affected their functioning at home or school. Most youths expressed that alcohol and drugs had had a negative psychological impact (e.g., mood

changes, depression). Given the prevalence of alcohol and drug use and given that youths recognized the negative impacts that alcohol and drug use have on their lives, homeless youths in Homer might benefit from better prevention and intervention efforts.

When asked what types of services were most needed in Homer, the vast majority (77.8%) expressed a need for places or outdoor locations where youths were welcome. In fact, 50.5 percent of the youths identified this as the most important needed service. No other result from our survey of homeless youths showed as much consistency as the expressed need for additional recreational opportunities.

It is important to note that this survey relies on the youths' answers and therefore may not match the perceptions of others. From the youths' point of view, however, recreation was the most important need. Although it may be doubtful that recreational opportunities would prevent homelessness, there is no doubt that youths in Homer lack adequate prosocial recreational opportunities and, as a result, spend much of their time bored or engaged in self-destructive behaviors. This conclusion is corroborated by our survey of available services. Few agencies in Homer provide recreational opportunities for adolescents. Most that do so are schools. This is problematic because (1) these services are available during the school year only and (2) these services are not available for youths not in school. Homeless youths are less likely to be in school and typically experience more problems during the summer, when school programs are not available. Although schools should continue their efforts to provide youth services, other agencies must step in when schools are closed and must provide services to youths that are not in school.

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Homeless youths

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To summarize, the recommendations that emerged from this study were to enhance employment assistance, drug and alcohol programming, family counseling, and recreational opportunities. Employment assistance should be designed to lead youths into productive work that pays enough to afford housing. All services should be developed so that they are also available during the summer, when youths are out of school, and available to all youths, including those who have stopped going to school. We also emphasized the need to keep the cost of these services as low as possible, as most of these youths (and their families) had few financial resources. Finally, we suggested

that existing services be better publicized, since few youths were aware of the resources already available.

Results from our survey clearly indicated that the causes of becoming homeless were different than the causes for remaining homeless. As youths slide into more severe forms of homelessness, the focus of assistance efforts must change from prevention to intervention. Successful prevention services would address the causes of becoming homeless while successful intervention services would address those for remaining homeless. Results from our survey indicate that the primary cause for becoming homeless was family problems while the primary cause for remaining homeless was lack of employment at an adequate wage.

Overall, the results from this survey were quite encouraging. There is much that can be done to address youth homelessness. Drug and alcohol counseling, family counseling, and employment assistance are already offered in many Alaskan communities. Unfortunately, youths were not always aware that these services were available, and some youths were disappointed with the quality of the services that were offered. We should strive to enhance these available social services as well as expand recreational opportunities.

*André Rosay is an assistant professor at the Justice Center. The report **2004 Census and Survey of Homeless Youths in Homer, Alaska** is available on the Justice Center website at <http://justice.uaa.alaska.edu>.*



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