



Criminal Offending Among Homeless Drug-Using Male Arrestees, Anchorage, 2000–2003

Criminal Offending and Homelessness

This Research Overview looks at homelessness and criminal offending among adult male arrestees who used illicit drugs at least once in the year preceding their arrest. The data were collected in Anchorage from 2000 to 2003 as part of the Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring (ADAM) program.

Criminal offense information for each arrestee was obtained from official agency records and through respondent self-reports. Detailed information was collected for the three most serious offenses leveled against each arrestee. A summary of this information is presented in Table 1 (Panel 1b). In addition to this, each arrestee was asked to report if they had ever been arrested previously as an adult, and if they had ever experienced a 24-hour detention in a correctional facility (including juvenile detention). Those who reported a prior arrest were also asked to estimate the total number of prior arrests; those arrestees who reported a prior incarceration were asked to estimate the total number of days they had spent in a correctional facility. A summary of this information is also presented in Table 1 (Panel 1a).

Each arrestee was also asked about their alcohol and drug use history. Each respondent was asked if they had ever had five or more drinks of alcohol on the same day, if they had ever used marijuana, if they had ever used

Table 1. Criminal History and Criminal Charges for Adult Male Arrestees,

1a. Criminal Charges for Current Arrest

Type of charge	Domiciled		Homeless*	
	Percent with any charges of this type	Average number of charges for current arrest	Percent with any charges of this type	Average number of charges for current arrest
Misdemeanor	73.7 %	1.11 charges	73.5 %	1.07 charges
Felony	33.7	0.47	34.2	0.52
Drug/alcohol	4.7	0.05	4.1	0.05
Order maintenance	7.0	0.07	17.8	0.18
Property	14.3	0.18	26.5	0.32
Violent	32.2	0.44	32.0	0.39

Note: Percentages don't sum to 100%.

1b. Criminal History Prior to Current Arrest

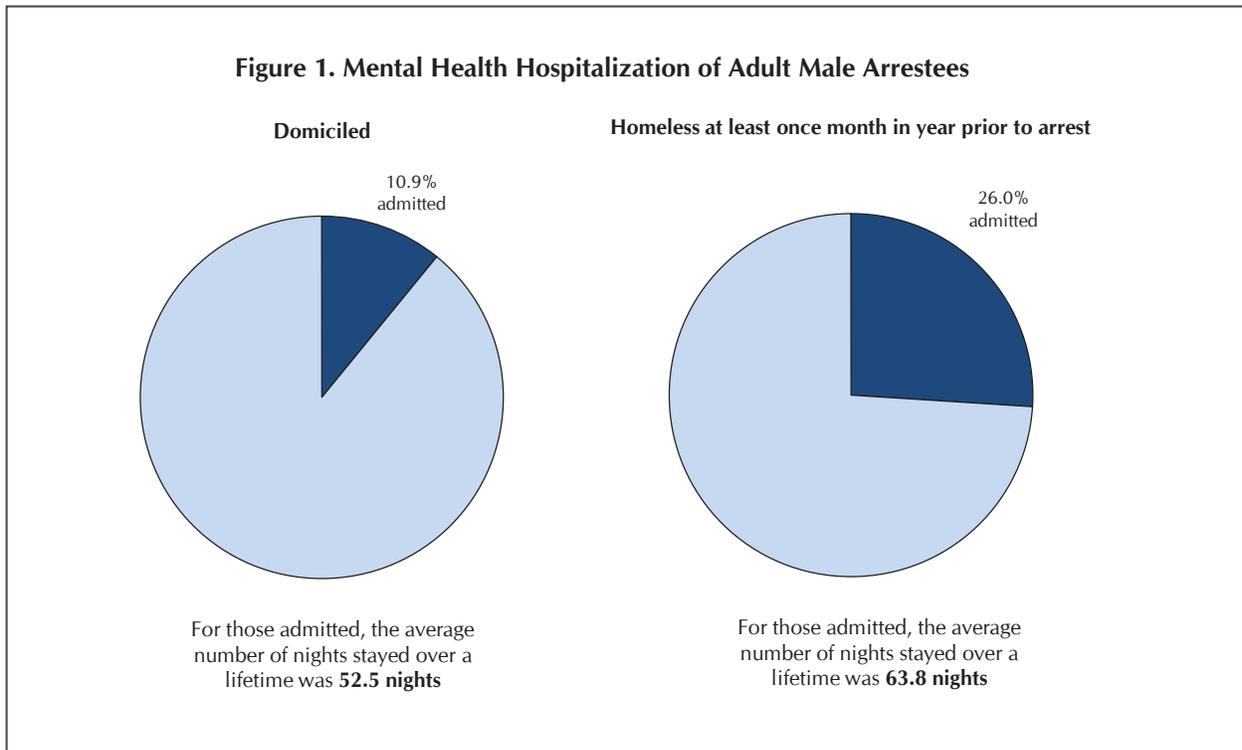
	Domiciled	Homeless*
Percent ever arrested	85.8 %	92.2 %
For those arrested, average total number of arrests	9.0 arrests	11.0 arrests
Percent ever put in jail or prison	82.6 %	90.4 %
For those imprisoned, average total number of days in jail or prison	663.9 days	1,094.9 days

* Homeless for at least one month in year prior to arrest.

crack cocaine, if they had ever used powder cocaine, if they had ever used heroin, and if they had ever used methamphetamine. For each drug (and alcohol), if an arrestee reported having used at least once in their lifetime, they were then asked if they had used that drug in the year preceding their arrest. This report presents results for the latter question – past year drug use – in Table 2 (Panel 2a).

To assess arrestee risk of substance abuse and dependency, arrestees who reported past 12-month alcohol or drug use were asked a battery of six questions designed to identify (“flag”) those at-risk for problematic alcohol or drug use. Each arrestee was asked: (1) In the past 12 months, have you spent more time drinking/using drugs than you intended? (2) Have you neglected some of your usual responsibilities because of using alcohol/drugs? (3) Have you wanted to cut down on your drinking/drug use? (4) In the past 12 months, has anyone objected to

Table 2. Drug and Alcohol Use, Risk, and History of Adult Male Arrestees, 2000–2003							
2a. Self-Reported Drug and Alcohol Use During 12 Months Prior to Arrest							
	Domiciled			Homeless*			
5 or more drinks on the same day in past 12 months	No	14.9 %	9.1 %	Used powder cocaine in past 12 months	No	30.0 %	40.2 %
	Yes	74.2	84.5		Yes	14.8	30.6
Used marijuana in past 12 months	No	27.8 %	10.5 %	Used methamphetamine in past 12 months	No	18.1 %	27.4 %
	Yes	49.6	85.4		Yes	4.0	7.8
Used crack/rock cocaine in past 12 months	No	17.5 %	16.9 %	Used heroin in past 12 months	No	8.7 %	16.0 %
	Yes	14.6	48.9		Yes	1.8	7.3
2b. Risk for Alcohol or Drug Dependency							
		Domiciled		Homeless*			
Alcohol dependency or abuse							
	Not at risk	29.0 %	16.2 %				
	Risk of alcohol abuse	16.4	10.1				
	Risk of alcohol dependency	54.6	73.7				
Drug dependency or abuse							
	Not at risk	33.0 %	29.9 %				
	Risk of drug abuse	17.6	15.0				
	Risk of drug dependency	49.4	55.1				
2c. History of Drug and Alcohol Treatment							
		Domiciled	Homeless*	Total			
	Any overnight stay in an inpatient treatment program	35.0 %	53.4 %	37.1 %			
	Any treatment ever in an outpatient drug treatment program	34.9	36.5	35.0			
* Homeless for at least one month in year prior to arrest.							



your use of alcohol/drug use? (5) Have you frequently found yourself thinking about drinking/using drugs? (6) Have you used alcohol/drugs to relieve feelings such as sadness, anger, or boredom? These items were derived from a subset of questions in the Substance Use Disorder Diagnostic Schedule (SUDDS-IV). (It is important to note that these measures were not designed or intended to be diagnostic tools; rather, they were designed to highlight problematic alcohol and drug use behaviors. Detailed information on these measures can be found in Crossland and Brownstein, 2003.¹) Results for these indicators of problem alcohol and drug use are presented in Table 2 (Panel 2b).

In addition to being asked about their alcohol and drugs use behaviors, arrestees were also asked about their encounters with substance abuse treatment services. Each arrestee was asked if they had ever stayed at least overnight in an inpatient or residential alcohol or drug treatment program, and if they had every been admitted to an outpatient alcohol or drug treatment program. Results for these items are presented in Table 2 (Panel 2c).

Arrestees were also questioned about their prior encounters with the mental health system, for issues other than substance abuse and dependence. Each respondent was asked, “Have you ever stayed at least overnight for mental health treatment – not for drug or alcohol use – at a psychiatric unit of a hospital or other facility?” Those who reported that they had at least one such experience, were then asked to estimate the total number of nights, in their lifetime, they had spent in the psychiatric unit of a hospital or other facility. Results for these items are presented in Figure 1.

1. Crossland, C.R. and Brownstein, H.H. (2003). “Drug dependence and treatment.” In *Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring: Annual Report 2000* (pp. 23–29). Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Justice.

Summary of Findings

Criminal offending

Homeless arrestees were more likely to have been arrested than domiciled arrestees (92.2% vs. 85.8%).

Homeless arrestees were more likely to have a prior incarceration than domiciled arrestees (90.4% vs. 82.6%).

Homeless arrestees reported more prior arrests than domiciled arrestees, on average (11 arrests vs. 9 arrests).

Homeless arrestees reported longer stays in correctional facilities than domiciled arrestees, on average (1,094 days vs. 663 days).

Homeless arrestees were no more likely than domiciled arrestees to be arrested for:

- a felony;
- a misdemeanor;
- a violent crime; or
- a drug crime.

Homeless arrestees were more likely than domiciled arrestees to be arrested for:

- an order maintenance offense; and
- a property crime.

Alcohol and drug use

Homeless arrestees were no more likely than domiciled arrestees to report:

- using methamphetamine

Homeless arrestees were more likely than domiciled arrestees to report:

- consuming 5 or more drinks on the same day in the year preceding arrest;
- using marijuana in the year preceding arrest;
- using crack cocaine in the year preceding arrest;
- using powder cocaine in the year preceding arrest; and
- using heroin in the year preceding arrest

Abuse and dependence

Homeless arrestees were no more likely than domiciled arrestees to:

- be at-risk for drug abuse
- be at-risk for drug dependence
- have been admitted to an outpatient drug or alcohol treatment program

Homeless arrestees were less likely than domiciled arrestees to:

- be at-risk for alcohol abuse

Homeless arrestees were more likely than domiciled arrestees to:

- be at-risk for alcohol dependency
- have stayed overnight in an inpatient drug or alcohol treatment program

Mental health hospitalization

Homeless arrestees were more likely than domiciled arrestees to:

- have stayed overnight in the psychiatric unit of a hospital or other facility

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