

Life After Lockdown

How Jail Affected the Health and Economic Opportunities of Former Inmates



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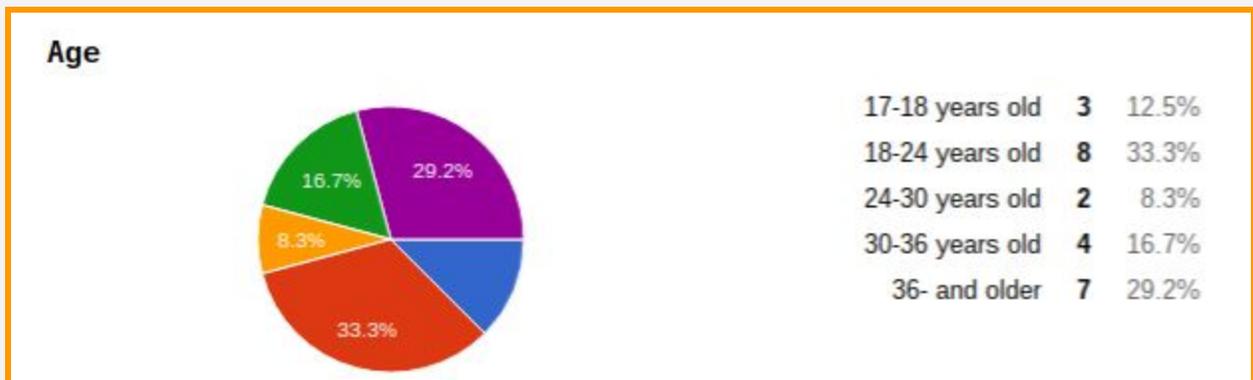
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INTRODUCTION

In the CALO YouthBuild Social Justice Campaign we fight injustice in the police and sheriff's departments. We joined this campaign to help fight for the people who need our support against the police and also to stop the 2 billion dollar jail plan. To promote our campaign, we created a survey that collected data about the health and economic opportunities lost due to incarceration in LA jails. When inmates are released from jail, it is harder for them to avoid the lifestyle they lived that got them in jail in the first place. The question we will investigate with this data is how jail affects the health and economic opportunities of former inmates. We will explore this essential question by doing a survey and using the data we find to answer the question.



LITERATURE REVIEW

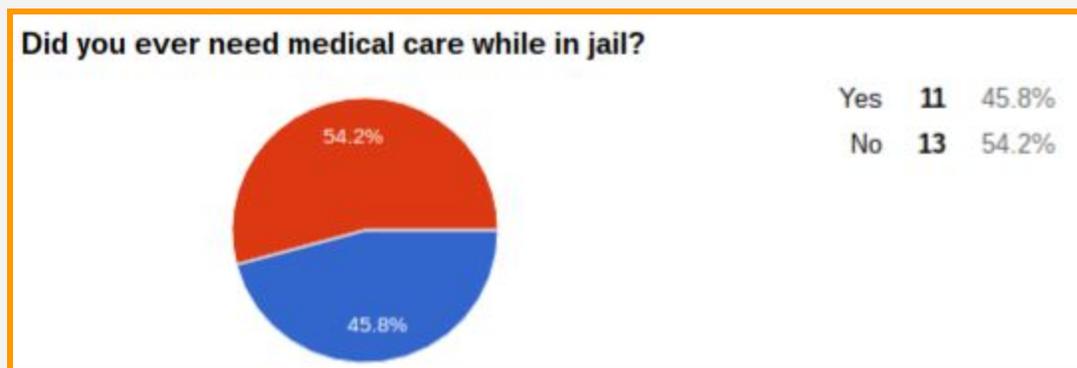
A big health problem inside jails is the fact that there are inmates who need help but are only met with doctors in the jail who try to stabilize them instead of healing them. According to Zawn Villines, "Jails and prisons are required to provide basic health care for inmates, but the quality of this care varies greatly. Often, prison-based mental health care focuses on stabilizing, rather than treating, inmates. A person experiencing hallucinations or psychosis might get medication to control the most severe symptoms, but people with Anxiety issues, depression, post traumatic stress, and other mental health conditions that don't cause radical changes in behavior may go untreated" (Villines). For example, someone who is going through depression will get drugged so the doctors don't have to deal with it. Healing confronts the problem and tries to overcome it. Prisons were designed to stabilize their illness that isn't physical and not help them. This shows how prisons struggle to deal with inmates who need help with their illnesses.

LITERATURE REVIEW

When inmates are released from jail, it is harder for them to avoid the lifestyle they lived that got them in jail in the first place. Being incarcerated can bring many problems to the inmate's life besides worrying about their families or children. All that time being locked up can affect their opportunities to get their life together outside of jail. The biggest problem they face is leaving the jails because incarceration can result in lost money and skills. Jails can affect the health and economic opportunities of an inmate by taking away an inmate's communication skills. After being incarcerated, people often feel in danger or threatened. This kind of anxiety can make it hard for them to get a normal job because everywhere they go they will check their background. It is important to be able to get a job when released from jail because many people lose their jobs while they are locked-up.

METHODS

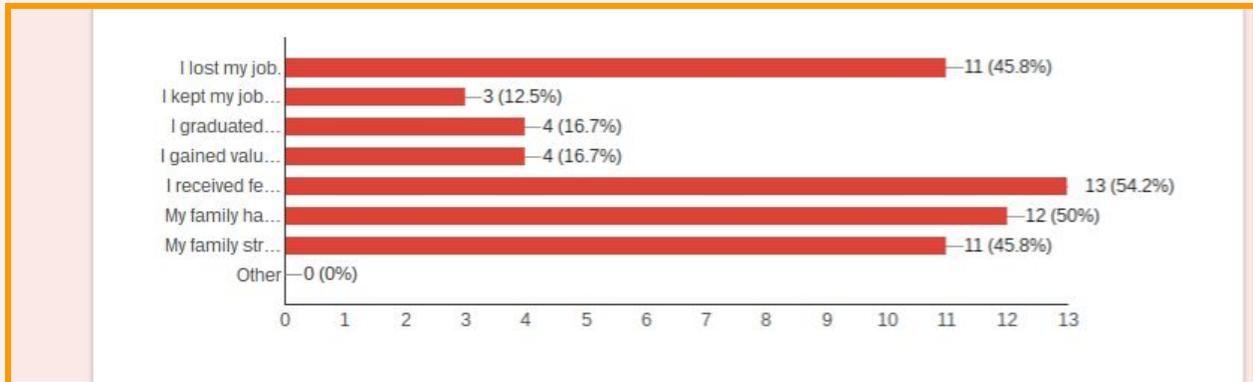
The method we chose is a survey. We thought this survey would be very informative and productive for the campaign because we would be doing outreach to our community asking questions about their experience in jail. Our results reflect the experiences of people who have been to Los Angeles county jail, not other jails. We read a few articles to help us develop questions for the survey.



HOW WE DID OUR QUESTIONS

To conduct the survey we needed to decide on a format for our questions. For the Health problems in jail we did research to find what was the most common health problems found while in prison. Reading articles really influenced my hypothesis and my questions. For the economic side we put

ourselves in their shoes to get questions and ask classmates for help. The survey questions were also consulted with our campaign teacher Canek Pena Vargas to see if they were good questions to ask.



HYPOTHESIS

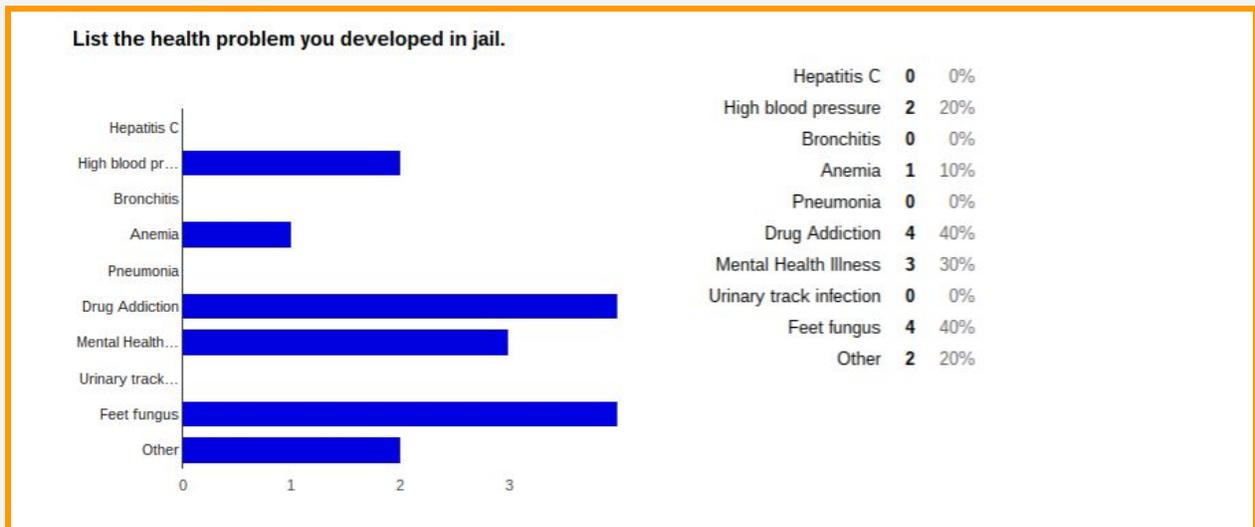
A question asked in the survey was “Did you ever develop a health problem coming out of jail that you didn’t have before entering?” The hypothesis I developed was yes and that **Hepatitis C** was going to be the most common answer. Another question in my survey was “Did you need medical care while in jail?” My hypothesis was that people would overwhelmingly answer yes.

HEALTH RESULTS

Surprisingly no one chose **hepatitis c**. In a lot of the articles I read before doing the survey, hepatitis c was one of the most common **infectious diseases** transmitted in jail. According to the Center for Disease Control, “After adjusting for under-ascertainment and under-reporting, an estimated 30,500 acute hepatitis c cases occurred in 2014” (Center for Disease Control). I think that my hypothesis did not match my results because maybe the people we surveyed don’t know or haven’t checked up with a doctor to see if they have hepatitis C. Another possibility could be that they were careful in jail not to share razors with other inmates.

My hypothesis that an overwhelming number of people would answer yes to the question of needing medical care in jail was way off. I received one vote shy of 50%. The reasoning behind my hypothesis was that a place full of prisoners with big egos would likely lead to violent conflicts that would require medical care.

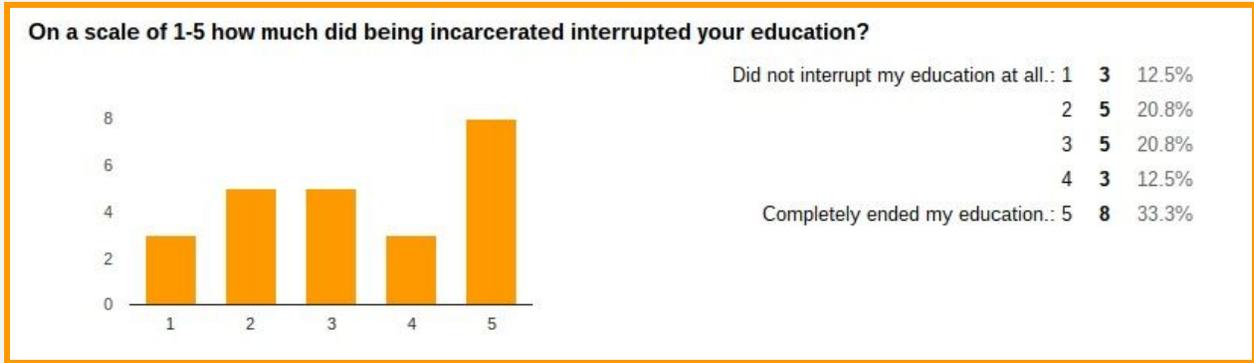
Ultimately, the results changed my perspective of how jail can affect someone's health. For example, according to our survey, a lot of people who went to jail got out a new drug addiction or mental health illness. The trauma developed in jail can lead to addiction or other forms of mental illness. The reason is because it either went untreated or was temporarily stabilized, not treated or eliminated. So instead of spending 2 billion dollar on another jail that cause mental health illnesses and other illnesses we should put the money to the community organizations that can provide those services more effectively.



ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES RESULT

Mario

Inmates might have lost some great opportunities to increase their economic status while being locked up because they are not able to contact anybody. They can lose work hours or lose their job all together. That can make it really hard for the inmate and his/her family to pay bills after incarceration because they won't have a job and others are going to reject them from working just because of their criminal history.



CONCLUSION

The essential question we asked was “How does jail affect the health and economic opportunities of former inmates?” I can imagine it is a daily struggle for someone who is trying live a normal life after jail. Ultimately, we didn't get enough responses to our survey to make any certain conclusions about the experiences of most formerly incarcerated people. What we could have done different was going and getting more people to answer the survey. We could have done more outreach by waiting outside of the Los Angeles jail and asking newly released people to answer the survey. My final thoughts about doing the survey is that it was a very good experience and I would recommend it and do it again. What I did learn with who we surveyed was that the people who have been in jail did acquire some sort of health problem they didn't have before entering. Also affected their economic state getting out of jail.

This survey was important because it shows how the ex LA county inmates were affected by their incarceration. What really caught my attention was that a lot of the inmates were released with drug addiction, and high blood pressure. Many were also charged with fees and fines. Without a job their fees would be nearly impossible to pay. All of these things can make it hard for inmates to rebuild their lives. Others are going to look at them as “criminals” and not give them a chance to earn money in a clean way, especially if they had drug addictions that can make them do things that may cause them to go back to the LA county jails.

WORK CITED

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