

BEHIND BARS IN CALCASIEU PARISH:

An Assessment of the Legal Needs
of Pre-Trial Defendants Appointed to the
Calcasieu Public Defender's Office



May 31, 2009

RESULTS FROM THE CALCASIEU JAIL SURVEY

The Louisiana Justice Coalition (LJC) is a non-profit organization whose mission is to protect the constitutional right to counsel and ensure the respect and dignity of each practitioner and every client by improving the delivery of public defense services and creating a receptive climate for positive change.

INTRODUCTION

“Slipping Through the Cracks II: Calcasieu Parish” is a study of 227 pre-trial indigent defendants in the Calcasieu Correctional Center (CCC) conducted by the Louisiana Justice Coalition (LJC) in August 2008 in collaboration with the Calcasieu Public Defender’s Office (14th Judicial District Court). The study was designed to achieve the following objectives:

- To create a profile of clients in Calcasieu Parish based on race, gender, income, age and criminal history;
- To assess the needs of the CCC prison population based on clients’ self-reported history of learning disabilities, mental illness, addiction, homelessness, incarceration, family life and employment.
- To record the scope and diversity of treatment options and alternatives to incarceration requested by clients;
- To document the effect of incarceration on the lives of clients, their families, support systems and immediate communities; and
- To identify trends in the collective experience.

A study of this kind is important and relevant for several reasons:

First According to a report, “One in 100,” released by the Pew Center on the States, Louisiana has the highest rate of incarceration of any state in the nation. Louisiana’s incarceration rate is significantly higher than the nation’s. The United States has the highest rate of incarceration among all industrialized nations. Louisiana has held this distinction for a number of years, and has a prison population that continues to rise faster than the national average. In January 2008, Louisiana had more than 106,600 people in state or parish prisons (Pew Center, 2008).

Second With incarceration expenditures related to incarceration increasing, prison costs in Louisiana make up an increasing percentage of the State budget. In 2007, \$552 million— 7.5% of the State’s total general fund expenditures—went towards corrections. State dollars spent on incarceration take money from other state programs, including education, health care and State infrastructure. When investments in social services face cuts, more and more people begin to slip through the cracks of programs designed to support the homeless, the unemployed, and those suffering from mental and physical disabilities.

Third A growing body of evidence from both practitioners and academics has affirmed the link between unmet social needs and crime.

Finally Louisiana is facing significant hurdles maintaining the progress of its recent reform successes in the State Legislature. In 2007 the Louisiana Legislature passed the Louisiana Public Defender Act (Act 307), which brought comprehensive structural reform to Louisiana’s public defense system. Most significantly, it removed the political influence of the judiciary on public defender offices and created a 15-member board empowered to create performance standards and evaluate the quality of services to achieve compliance with the U.S. and Louisiana State Constitutions. Act 307 passed the Legislature with more than 100 co-authors, reflecting broad awareness of the problem at the state level and commitment to change. The State Legislature also appropriated \$28.5 million for public defense in Fiscal Year 2007-2008, its highest level of support to date. This funding was

designed to better equip local defender offices with the resources to adequately and effectively provide clients' their constitutional right to counsel.

KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The issues uncovered by this survey include:

1. **Addiction.** 55% expressed a desire for drug or alcohol treatment.
2. **Mental Illness.** 26% were diagnosed with a mental health problem.
3. **Homelessness.** 13% reported being homeless at least once in their lives.
4. **Prior experience in jail.** 82% had a prior adult conviction.
5. **Foster care.** 16% reported having been in the foster care system as a child.
6. **Literacy and special education.** 16% reported attending special education classes and 60% did not graduate from high school.
7. **Employment.** 68% reported working during the month prior to their arrest.
8. **Families.** 74% had children; 22% reported having been the primary source of income for their dependents prior to arrest.
9. **A Local Problem.** 65% reported living in Calcasieu Parish all their lives.
10. **Demographics.** The average age was 33 years 12% were women, and 63% African American.

ABOUT THE REPORT

METHODOLOGY

This study supports the relationship between crime and unmet social needs. The research reveals that the vast majority of public defender clients awaiting trial in jail are suffering from at least one kind of crisis, be it a crisis in housing, addiction, employment, or mental and/or physical health.

The interviews were conducted on August 25th, 26th, and 27th of 2008 at the Calcasieu Corrections Center. 250

Prison costs are blowing holes in state budgets but barely making a dent in recidivism rates. At the same time, policy makers are becoming increasingly aware of research -backed strategies for community corrections – better ways to identify which offenders need a prison cell and which can be safely handled in the community... In exploring such alternatives, lawmakers are learning that current prison growth is not driven primarily by a parallel increase in crime, or a corresponding surge in the population at large. Rather, it flows principally from a wave of policy choices that are sending more law-breakers to prison. -- Pew Center for the States, “One in 100: Behind Bars in America 2008”, pg 3

inmates were randomly selected by the Calcasieu Public Defender’s Office for this study. This number amounted to approximately one-third of incarcerated defendants assigned to the Calcasieu Public Defender’s Office. The inmates were brought to one of several rooms where LJC and Calcasieu Public Defender office staff conducted the interviews. All of the clients interviewed were instructed that they would not be compensated for their time. No effort was made to interview clients who had bonded out of prison or had been otherwise released. In all interviews, LJC used a twenty-page questionnaire consisting of closed questions. No verification of information reported by the clients was conducted. Most of the interviews were conducted in a private room, though some were conducted, out of necessity, in common areas within the CCC. The duration of each interview was roughly 45 minutes.

Participation in the study was voluntary, and approximately 15 defendants declined to participate in this study. No randomly selected prisoner was intentionally refused an interview. Prisoners signed a release at the start interview.

For the purpose of this study, LJC acted as an agent of the Calcasieu Parish Office of the Public Defender and all information collected was passed to the defendants’ attorney’s and represents protected, confidential work product of the Calcasieu Parish Office of the Public Defender

ABOUT THE COMMUNITY DEFENSE MODEL

Louisiana jails have increasingly become the centers of communities, housing individuals who have been unable to get the assistance they need to avoid becoming court-involved, and processing large numbers of residents within particular communities. The first step for transforming the model of public defense and related court agencies is to gain an increased appreciation for, and sensitivity to, the extra-legal needs of incarcerated clients.

An individual’s first contact with the criminal justice system offers a public defender a rare moment in which to assess many of that individual’s most salient needs, including those that lie outside of the immediate realm of the legal system. Holistic defense seeks to replace the inevitability of incarceration with effective alternatives achieved through a strong collaboration between community service providers and the public defender office. The presence of social workers in the public defender office – integrated into the defense team – can address the social service needs of select clients so that they do not continue to re-cycle through the criminal justice

system. By aggressively addressing unmet social service needs, the community defense model increases public safety and decreases criminal justice costs while supporting individuals and their families to become healthy members of the community.

The Louisiana Public Defender Act— on its face, and due to the increased awareness of policy makers allowing growing public dialogue on criminal justice issues that led to its passage —creates a tremendous opportunity to create a high-quality public defense system in Louisiana. LJC believes that quality defense mandates a community defense model in which public defenders are committed to achieving better outcomes for their clients, and are willing to collaborate with social workers and social service providers. Towards this end LJC will work with the Calcasieu Parish Office of the Public Defender to undertake research, implement effective solutions, evaluate success and promote policy changes. The Brennan Center for Justice makes six broad recommendations to guide public defenders in the implementation of the community defense model. These are:

1. Reinvent Defender Culture;
2. Reach Out To Client Communities;
3. Investigate Police Misconduct and Help Clients Avoid Negative Police Interaction;
4. Make Contacts with Social Service Providers and, Where Appropriate, Divert Clients at First Appearance;
5. Improve Communication with Clients; and
6. Facilitate Client Re-entry at front and back ends of the criminal justice process.

GOAL

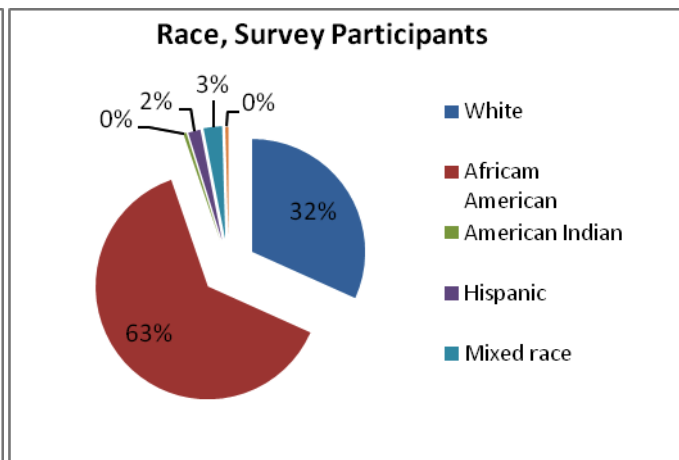
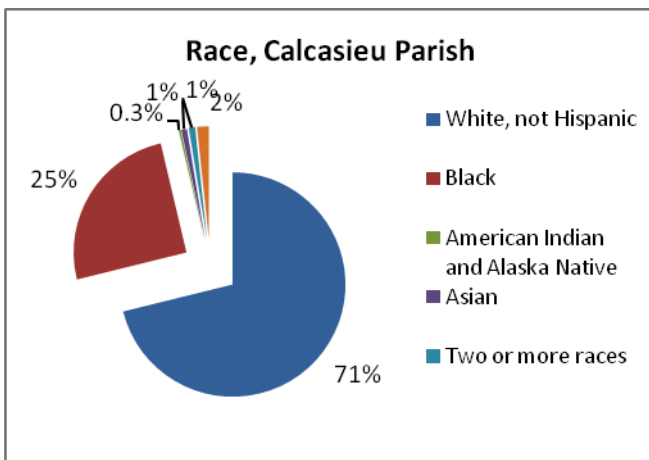
The ultimate goal of our work is to protect the constitutional right to counsel and implement a community defense model that empowers public defenders to provide high quality representation to each of their clients, making a broader range of options available to defendants, saving tax dollars, protecting public safety and restoring community health.

AUTHORSHIP

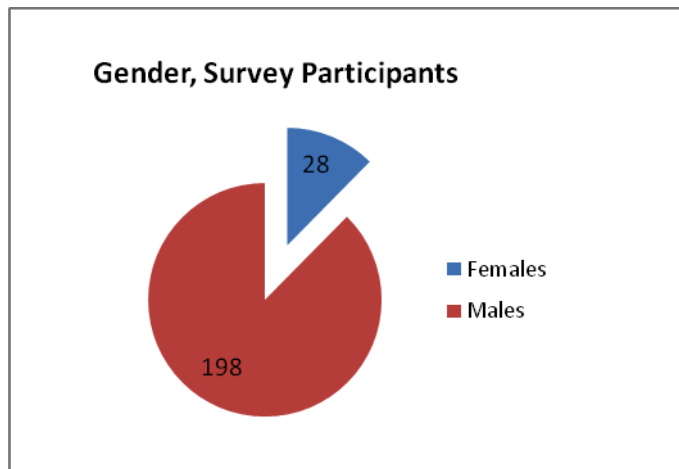
This report was created by the staff of the Louisiana Justice Coalition. Its principal author is Celeste Lofton-Bagert.

DEMOGRAPHICS

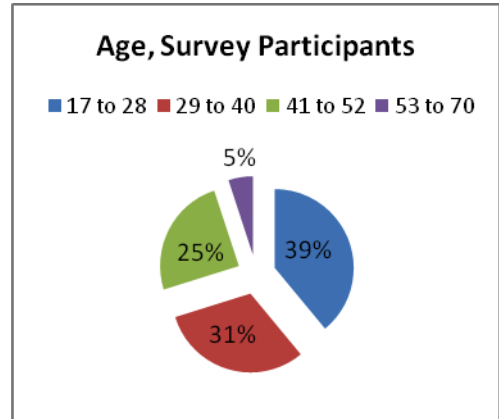
RACE: Large disparities exist between the relative size of racial groups in the general population and in that number represented in the Calcasieu Correctional Center (CCC). Of the 227 people who participated in the survey, 63 percent identified themselves as African American, 32 percent as white, 3 percent two or more races, and 2 percent Hispanic or Latino. One person identified himself as American Indian. This distribution of race within the Calcasieu jail survey differs significantly different from that of the general population. Although non-Hispanic whites make up 71 percent of the area population, they make up only 32 percent of the parish jail population. Inversely, African Americans make up 63 percent of the jail sample population even though they constitute just 25 percent of the general population. The two charts below illustrate these findings. These numbers speak to vast differences in arrest rates between African Americans and whites in the Lake Charles area.



GENDER: Across the country, men make up the vast majority of the incarcerated population. In recent decades, the incarceration rate of women has increased. In the CCC, the majority of survey participants were male. Out of the 227 people surveyed 198 (or 88 percent) were male while the remaining 12 percent were female. LJC interviewed all of the women under CCC custody at the time the interviews were conducted.



AGE: The CCC houses those inmates aged 17 years or older who are charged with a crime. Inmates younger than 17 years are housed in a different location. The average age of the inmates surveyed was 33 years, with the most common age reported being 25. The age of clients ranged from 17 years old to one client of 69 years.



INCOME: The survey participants were asked which of thirteen income ranges best reflect their estimated monthly income prior to their arrest. The average reported income among those interviewed was \$1,488. The most frequent income category was \$2,000 to \$2,499, but reported income ranged from \$0 to over \$7,500. Most clients received income from wages. Some clients received food stamps, social security, or retirement income. The chart located below shows the number of people who reported receiving various sources of income. 64 people reported more than one source of income and 28 reported receiving no income. More than two-thirds of the clients interviewed, 71 percent, reported receiving wages.

| Sources of Income, Sampled Calcasieu Public Defender Clients | Number | Percent of Total |
|--|--------|------------------|
| Public Assistance | 7 | 3% |
| Wages | 162 | 71% |
| Retirement | 5 | 2% |
| Social Security | 17 | 7% |
| Food Stamps | 35 | 15% |
| Veterans Benefits | 5 | 2% |
| Unemployment | 1 | 0% |
| Spouse's Income | 23 | 10% |

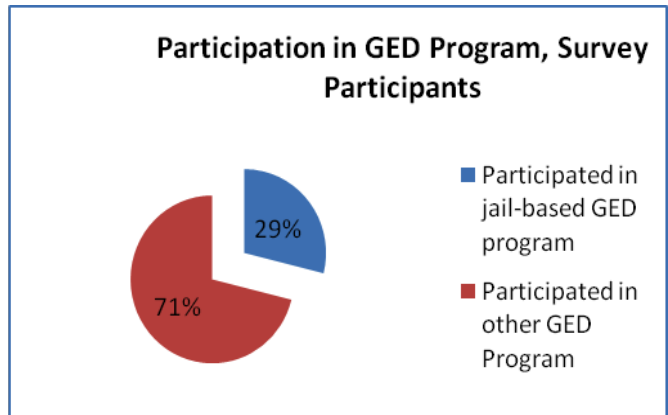
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT: Compared to educational attainment in Calcasieu Parish as a whole, clients in the CCC were less likely to have graduated high school and less likely to have earned a bachelor’s degree. 34 percent of clients in jail aged 25 years or older graduated high school, compared to 75 percent parish-wide. None of the clients in jail reported having a bachelor’s degree compared to 17 percent Parish-wide.

| Educational Attainment, US Census | United States | Louisiana | Calcasieu Parish |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|-----------|------------------|
| High school graduates | 80% | 75% | 80% |
| Bachelor's degree or higher | 24% | 19% | 24% |

There was a wide range of educational attainment among the clients interviewed, ranging from one client who completed three years of study at a four year university down to two clients who did not attend elementary school at all. 60 percent of clients did not graduate high school while 15 percent completed some college.

| Education Level, Sampled Calcasieu Public Defender Clients | Number | Percent of Total |
|--|--------|------------------|
| Did not graduate elementary | 3 | 1% |
| Graduated 8th Grade | 30 | 13% |
| Some high school | 105 | 46% |
| Graduated high school | 55 | 24% |
| Some college | 33 | 15% |
| Unknown | 1 | 0% |
| Total | 227 | 100% |

Many clients who did not graduate high school sought to obtain a Graduate Educational Development credential, or GED. Of those clients who did not graduate from high school, 65 percent participated in a GED program and 33 percent obtained a GED credential. Of the ninety clients who reported participating in a GED program, 26 clients, or 29 percent, did so while in jail. GED programs inside and outside of correctional facilities seem to be significant sources of educational attainment for the public defender client population.

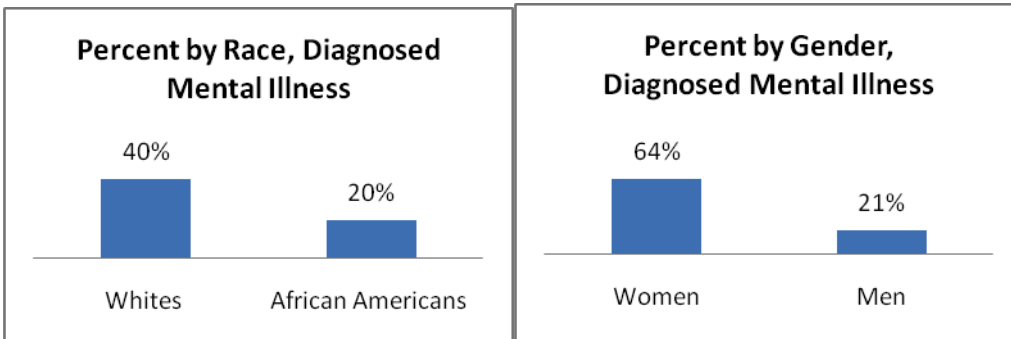


MENTAL HEALTH

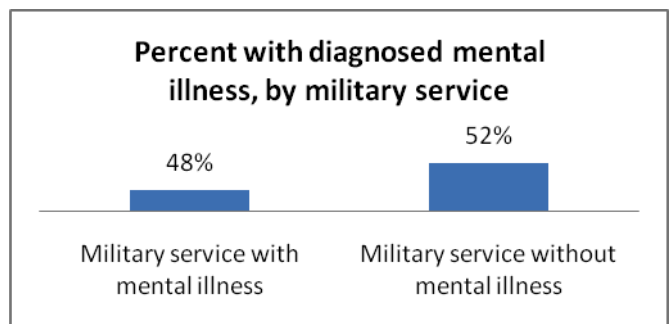
| Mental Health, Sampled Calcasieu Public Defender Clients | Number | Percent of Total |
|---|--------|------------------|
| Has been diagnosed with a mental, nervous, or emotional problem at any time during the year prior to arrest | 60 | 26% |
| Has taken medication for mental health problem | 48 | 21% |
| Was taking medication at the time of arrest | 23 | 10% |
| Has been medicated in jail | 31 | 14% |
| Has been admitted to a mental hospital, unit or treatment program | 40 | 18% |
| Has stayed overnight at a facility for treatment of a mental health problem | 36 | 16% |
| Is interested in receiving mental health treatment | 76 | 33% |
| Has attempted suicide at least once | 32 | 14% |

Many of our state’s mentally ill go undertreated and without sufficient support. As a result, mentally ill people are vastly over-represented in our criminal justice system. The results from the Calcasieu jail survey reiterate this fact and make clear the need for improved mental health services. More than one quarter of the people interviewed had been diagnosed with a mental, nervous, or emotional issue during the year prior to arrest. 21 percent of those interviewed reported taking medication for their mental health issue, but only 10 percent reported taking their medication at the time of their arrest. This statistic may suggest that some people who

suffer from mental illness engage in activities leading to their arrest when they are not medicated. Further research and analysis is needed in this area.



WHICH CLIENTS WERE MORE LIKELY TO SUFFER FROM A DIAGNOSED MENTAL ILLNESS? Several groups were over-represented in the population of clients with mental health issues: Whites, women, and those persons with military experience. Whites reported having a diagnosed mental illness at a higher rate than African Americans. Women were also more likely to report a mental illness. 30 percent of those who reported a mental illness were women, even though women made up only 12 percent of the survey population. Those with military experience were also over-represented among those who reported having a diagnosed mental illness. Of those with mental illnesses, 20 percent had been in the military, compared to only 11 percent among the entire population. Further study is needed to better understand these disparities and their causes.



WHAT OTHER ISSUES DO PEOPLE WITH MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES HAVE?

- **Childhood Trauma:** Mentally ill clients were more likely to have been abused or neglected as a child. Mentally ill clients were also more likely to report their mothers being arrested and to have had a serious head injury.
- **Income:** Mentally ill clients were more likely to not have worked during the month prior to their arrest and were more likely to receive food stamps.
- **Drugs and Alcohol:** Mentally ill clients were more likely to have been in a drug or alcohol program and more likely to want rehabilitative drug or alcohol treatment.
- **Treatment of Mental Health:** 73 percent took medication for mental health issue. 37 percent were on medication at the time of arrest. Half had been admitted to a hospital for treatment of a mental health problem at some time in their lives. 75 percent wanted mental health treatment. 43 percent had attempted suicide at least once in their life.
- **Physical Health:** 45 percent of mentally ill clients reported having difficulties seeing, and 23 percent reported having difficulties hearing. 32 percent reported having a learning disability, and over half, 52 percent reported having had a serious head injury. 45 percent of those who reported having a mental illness considered themselves to have a disability.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

37 clients, 16 percent of the total number surveyed, reported attending special education classes. There is no clear pattern in the race or gender of those clients who attended special education programs.

Educational Attainment: 35 percent of clients who attended special education classes graduated from high school, compared to 40 percent of clients who did not attend special education classes. Clients who had attended special education classes but who did not graduate high school were less likely to have completed a GED program and more likely to want to participate in a GED program. It should be noted that special education programs have only developed in recent decades.

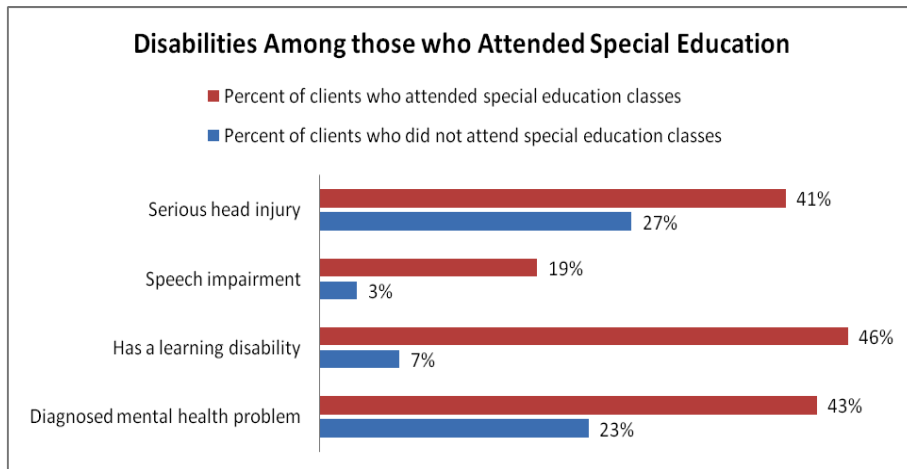
Mental Health: The survey results point toward a relationship between special education and mental health. Among clients who reported attending special education classes, forty-three percent also reported being diagnosed with a mental illness, compared to 23 percent of those who did not attend special education classes. 27 percent reported having attempted suicide at least once in their life.

Childhood Trauma: The survey also revealed differences regarding childhood trauma, such as: abuse, police visits, and the arrest of the father. Almost one third, or 32 percent, reported being neglected, 46 percent reported being abused as a child.

People who reported attending special education classes were less likely to have worked during the month prior to arrest compared to those who did not attend special education classes.

| Childhood Trauma Indicators, Sampled Calcasieu Public Defender Clients | Attended Special Education Classes | Did Not Attend Special Education Classes |
|--|------------------------------------|--|
| Reported being abused | 32% | 22% |
| Reported being neglected | 32% | 19% |
| Reported witnessing police visits to the home | 46% | 32% |
| Reported father being arrested | 43% | 32% |

Disabilities: Clients who had attended special education classes were also more likely than others to suffer from some kind of disability. 41 percent of clients who attended special education classes reported having a serious head injury at some point in their life, 19 percent reported suffering from a speech impairment, 46 percent reported a learning disability and 43 percent reported a mental health issue.



DRUG USE

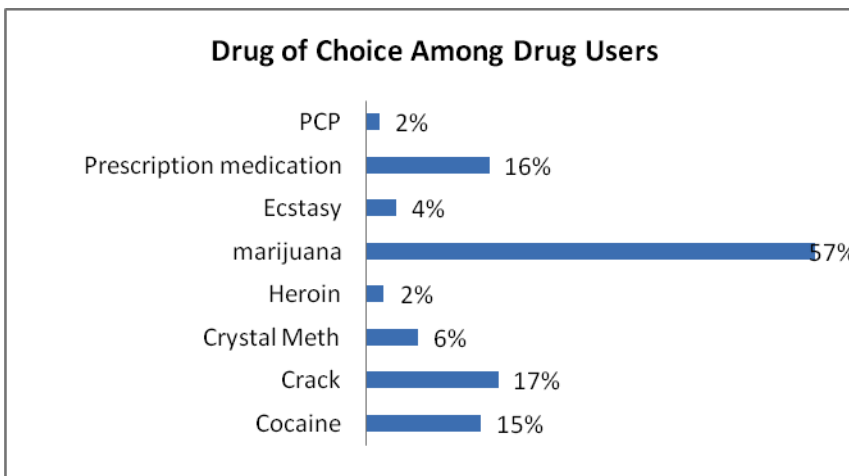
Drug Use: LJC surveyed clients about the types of drugs they used, the frequency of use, whether or not they were using at the time of arrest, and whether or not they had ever used illegal drugs. Questions about drug use can be sensitive, particularly since some of the clients interviewed were charged with but not yet convicted of a drug-related crime.

| Past Use of Illegal Drugs, Sampled Calcasieu Public Defender Clients | Total | African Americans | Whites | Men | Women |
|--|-------|-------------------|--------|-----|-------|
| Has used illegal drugs | 82% | 82% | 82% | 82% | 79% |

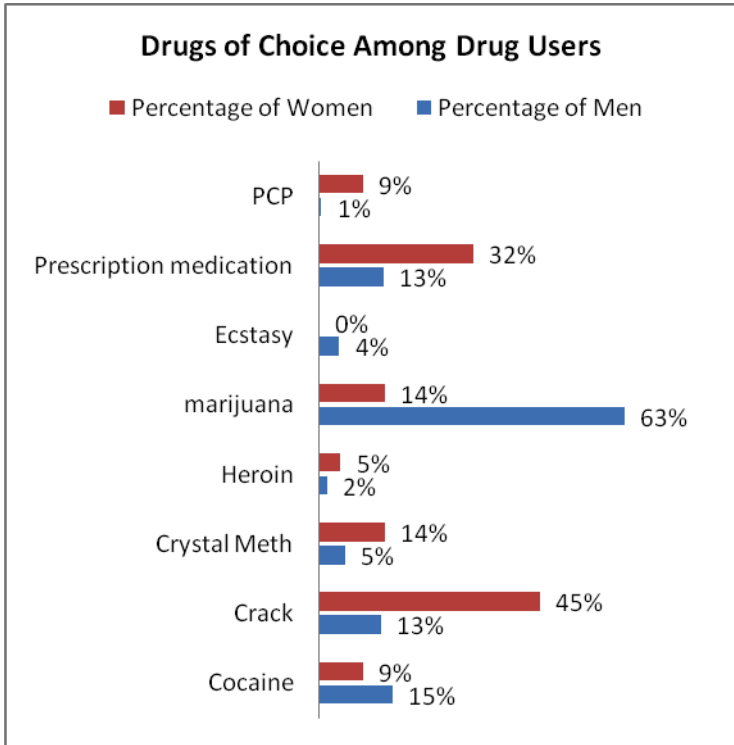
Drug use and addiction is a problem common to all cross-sections of the clients interviewed, with men, women, whites and African Americans having used illegal drugs in almost equal percentages. Over half of clients, or 52 percent, answered, “Yes” when asked, “were you using drugs at the time of your arrest?”

| Frequency of Drug Use, Sampled Calcasieu Public Defender Clients | Percent of Total |
|--|------------------|
| Once per month or less | 6% |
| Several times per month | 3% |
| Weekly | 7% |
| 2-3 times weekly | 11% |
| Everyday | 45% |
| Has not used illegal drugs | 18% |
| Unknown/Refused | 9% |
| Total | 100% |

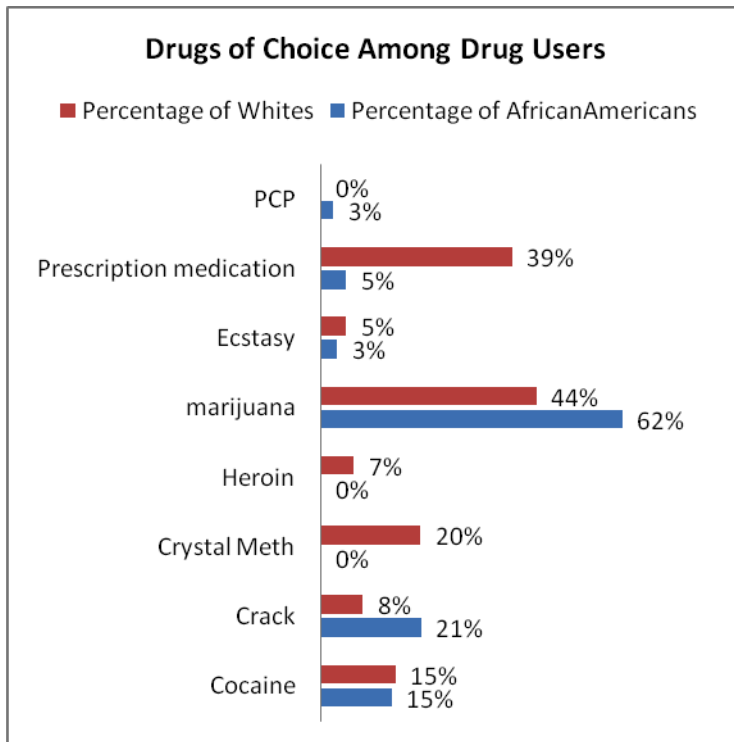
Frequency of Drug Use: Over half of the respondents who said they had used illegal drugs used several times a week if not everyday. 18 percent of respondents reported that they had never used illegal drugs.



Drug of Choice among Users: Marijuana was the most popular drug among those clients who reported past use of illegal drugs, with over half of users listing marijuana as at least one drug of choice (some respondents gave multiple answers). Crack cocaine, powder cocaine and prescription medication were the second, third and fourth most popular drugs, respectively.

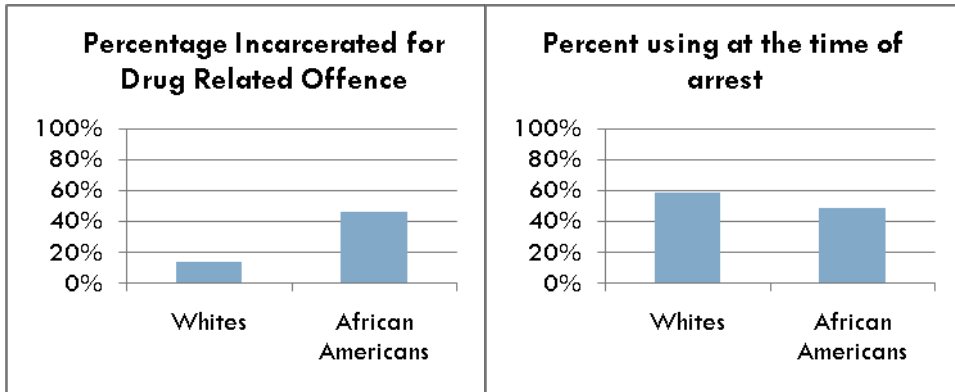


Differences by Gender: Women preferred crack-cocaine (45 percent), followed by prescription medication (32 percent). Men preferred marijuana (63 percent) followed by cocaine (15 percent) and prescription medication (13 percent).

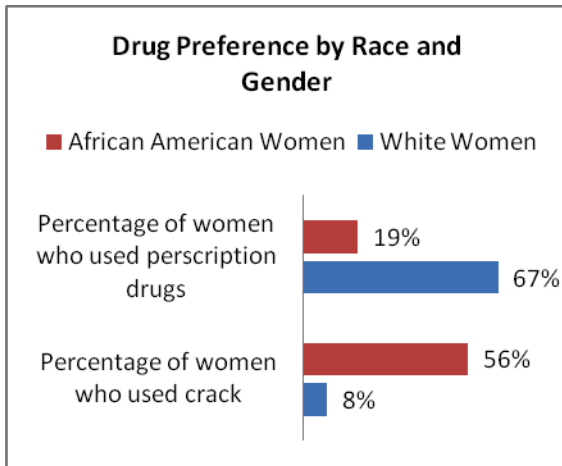


Differences by Race: Whites reported a preference for marijuana, followed by prescription medication and crystal meth. African Americans also preferred marijuana followed by crack cocaine and powder cocaine.

Drug-related offenses:



Similar percentages of African Americans and whites were participating in drug court at the time of arrest and a similar percentage of whites and blacks had a prior conviction. There was a difference in the percentages of whites and African Americans who faced a drug-related charge. 43 percent of African Americans reported a drug related offense as their current charge, a 32 point difference from whites, of whom 14 percent reported having a drug related offense at the time of the interview. No further investigation was made to confirm the reported charge.



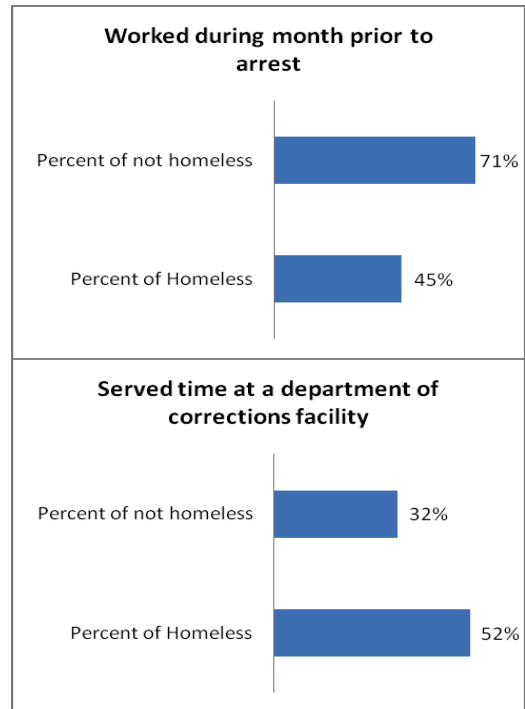
Prescription Drug use: Illegal prescription drug use was higher among white clients than African American clients. 50 percent of whites reported using prescription drugs not prescribed by a doctor, compared to 19 percent of African Americans.

HOMELESSNESS

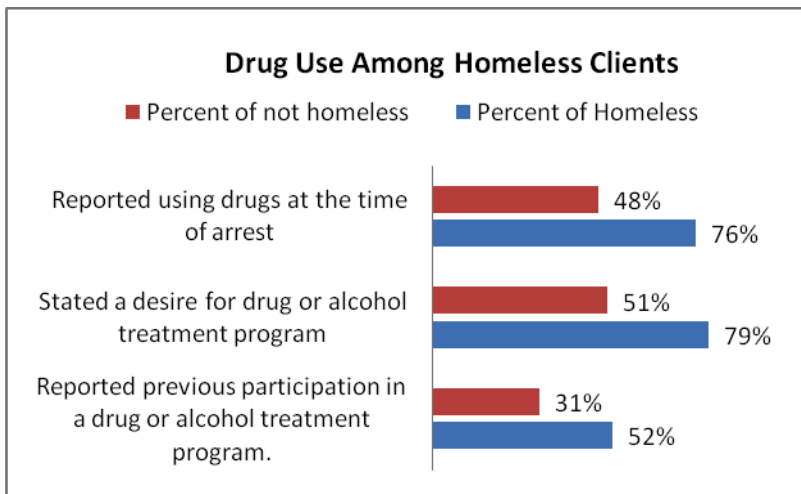
29 of the respondents reported having been homeless at least once in their life.

NOTE: Homelessness is difficult to measure as different people have difference conceptions of homelessness. Homeless for one client might mean sleeping on a brother’s couch, while for the next client, it might mean sleeping outside. The following should thus be understood as an approximate indicator of homeless.

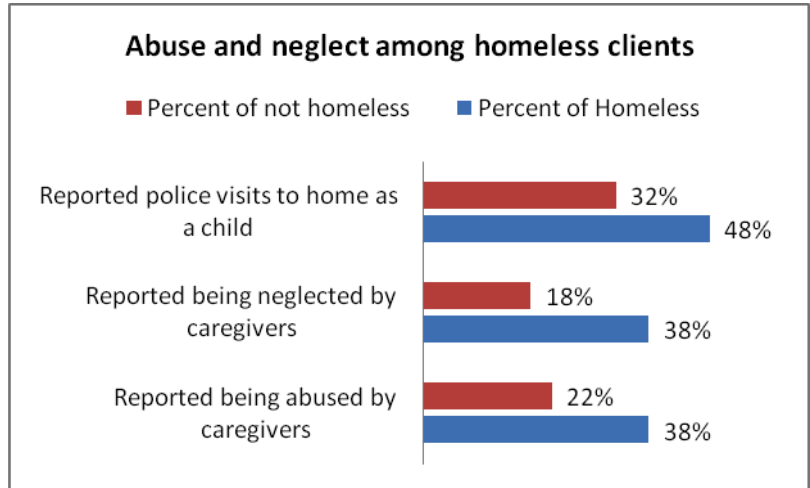
These clients were more likely than other clients to report having served time at a correctional facility for a prior conviction, and less likely to have worked in the month prior to the arrest. Of those who reported being homeless, 45 percent reported working during the month prior to arrest, compared to 71 percent of those who reported never being homeless. Of those who reported being homeless, over half, or 52 percent, reported serving time in a Louisiana correctional facility, versus 32 percent of those who had not been homeless.



Drug Use: 76 percent of respondents who reported having been homeless at least once were using drugs at the time of their arrest. Of those who did not report having been homeless, 48 percent reported using at the time of the arrest. These numbers suggest a correlation between drug use and homelessness.



Neglect and Abuse: Clients who reported being homeless reported neglect, abuse, and police visits to the home as a child more often than those who reported never being homeless. It thus appears that those who reported being homeless were more likely to have experienced childhood trauma. More research is needed to better understand the connection between homelessness and abuse among inmates.



The chart to the left was taken from the Louisiana Department of Health and Human Services Parish Health Assessment. According to that survey, the Caddo/Bossier area has a total of 776 beds available to homeless people. More information is needed, but the frequency of homelessness among the clients interviewed may indicate a need for an increased capacity for homeless shelters.

Calcasieu Homeless Needs Assessment Survey, 2004

| | |
|--|-------|
| Number of shelters (2004)..... | 11 |
| Number Responding to Survey..... | 11 |
| Daily Capacity - Responding Shelters | 259 |
| No. served in a 12 month period (unduplicated) | 4,976 |
| Adults (18 years and older)..... | 4,570 |
| Youth (5 to 17 years)..... | 207 |
| Children (less than 5)..... | 199 |

Homelessness represents a major issue for public defender offices. Homeless people’s arrests often are related to their lack of shelter, and public defenders’ offices often inherit the most vulnerable homeless clients. Public defenders’ contact with homeless people is an important point of opportunity for social service intervention.

FOSTER CARE

36 clients, or 16 percent, reported being placed in foster care as a child. This data must be understood as preliminary, due to the small sample size and the possibility of under or over reporting of foster care attendance by clients.

A higher percentage of clients who reported attending foster care reported having mental health issues, as the chart below demonstrates. 19 percent more clients who reported attending foster care reported having a diagnosed mental health issue, and a full 30 percent more reported a suicide attempt. This data suggests that children exiting the foster care system may be leaving with mental health issues in significant numbers.

| Incidence of Mental Health Issues, Sampled Calcasieu Public Defender Clients | Had diagnosed mental illness | Was admitted to mental health treatment | Is interested in mental health treatment | Attempted suicide |
|--|------------------------------|---|--|-------------------|
| Placed in Foster Care | 42% | 31% | 53% | 39% |
| Not Placed in Foster Care | 23% | 15% | 29% | 9% |

The frequency of reported mental health issues may be connected to the finding that those clients who were placed in foster care also reported abuse and neglect by their caregivers at higher rates. Similarly, while only 9 percent of those clients who did not come out of the foster care system reported an arrest of their mother during childhood, 42 percent of those placed in the foster care system reported an arrest of their mother. Thus experience in the foster care system may be correlated with higher instances of childhood trauma and higher mental illness.

| Incidence of Childhood Trauma, Sampled Calcasieu Public Defender Clients | Was abused | Was neglected | Police visited the home | Mother was arrested |
|--|------------|---------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| Placed in Foster Care | 44% | 44% | 50% | 42% |
| Not Placed in Foster Care | 19% | 16% | 32% | 9% |

Although other questions surrounding drug use yielded similar answers among those who reported being placed in foster care and those who did not, prescription drug use differed by 13 points; 44 percent of those clients who reported experience in foster care also reported illegally using prescription drugs, compared to 26 percent among those clients who reported no foster care experience.

| Drug Use, Sampled Calcasieu Public Defender Clients | Used prescription drugs not prescribed to client | Stated a desire for drug treatment |
|---|--|------------------------------------|
| Placed in Foster Care | 44% | 78% |
| Not Placed in Foster Care | 26% | 50% |

A higher percentage of those clients who reported being placed in foster care also reported serving time for a past criminal offence. 33 percent spent time in a juvenile care facility, and 61 percent reported serving time in a Louisiana Department of Corrections facility.

| Past Jail Time, Sampled Calcasieu Public Defender Clients | Spent time in a juvenile care facility | Served time in a DOC facility |
|---|--|-------------------------------|
| Placed in Foster Care | 33% | 61% |
| Not Placed in Foster Care | 12% | 29% |

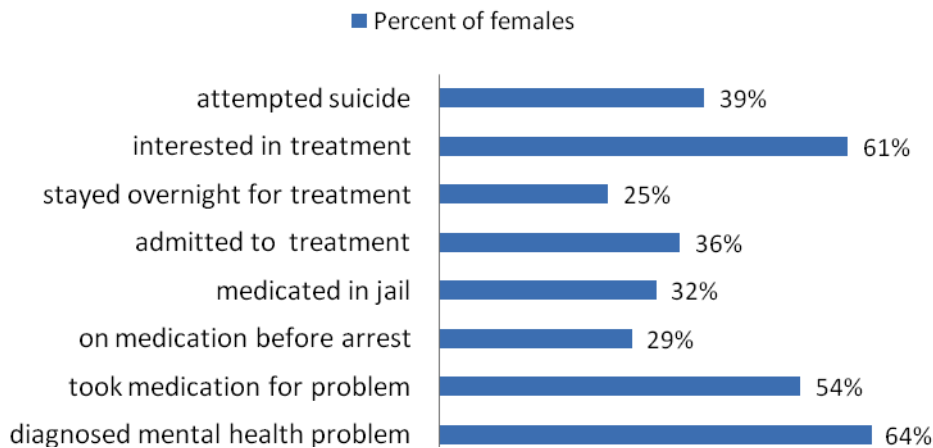
GENDER

Women are more likely to have graduated high school, less likely to have a prior arrest, more likely to have been homeless, more likely to have been impacted by the hurricanes, more likely to have children, more likely to have children living with them, less likely to receive income from wages, more likely to receive food stamps, more likely to want drug treatment

Women are more likely to be financially responsible for their children and to have had children living with them. All but two women reported having children, a rate of 93 percent. 70 percent of men reported having children. 54 percent of women reported having dependent children at the time of arrest while 28 percent of men reported dependent children at arrest. Women were more likely to be the primary source of income for dependent children.

Women and Mental Health: Women were much more likely to report having a diagnosed mental illness: 64 percent of women and 21 percent of men. Accordingly, the rate of women who reported a suicide attempt, a hospital stay due to mental illness, and ongoing drug treatment for a mental illness in jail were higher than that for men.

Female Mental Health



CLIENTS’ PERCEPTIONS OF PUBLIC DEFENSE

There is a limit to the number of cases defense counsel can handle per year and still provide effective, efficient, high quality, ethical, conflict-free legal representation for each and every client.

National standards set that limit at 150 felonies per year, 200 juvenile cases per year, or 400 misdemeanor cases per year. Reports document defender caseloads well in excess of these standards throughout the state. Without binding caseload standards, clients are not given the individualized attention needed to ensure a fair hearing, often delaying the processing of cases and increasing the length of pretrial detention at taxpayer expense. According to data provided by the Louisiana Public Defender Board from 2007, the Calcasieu Parish Public Defender Office took 6,416 cases with a staff of 12 attorneys. This equates to an average of 329 felony cases, 154 misdemeanor cases per attorney. In addition, the office represented two clients in capital cases. Without increased funding for staff, the capacity for the Office to provide adequate defense is compromised.

| Frequency of Visits from Attorney, Sampled Calcasieu Public Defender Clients | Number of Clients |
|--|-------------------|
| No visits | 168 |
| One to three visits | 39 |
| Five or more visits | 7 |
| Total | 214 |

79 percent of clients reported that they did not receive a visit from their attorney at the time of the interview. While this is in part due to the fact that some of the clients interviewed had been arrested in just the last day or two, this fact reflects the

way in which the overwhelming number of cases appointed to public defenders in Calcasieu Parish affects clients.

| Clients' Knowledge of Attorneys' Name, Sampled Calcasieu Public Defender Clients | Number of Clients |
|--|-------------------|
| Client does not know lawyer's name | 23 |
| Client knows lawyers' name | 193 |
| Unknown | 6 |
| Total | 222 |

Although most of the clients interviewed had not received a visit from their attorney, 87 percent knew the name of the attorney representing them.

| Do you feel your attorney has kept you informed? Sampled Calcasieu Public Defender Clients | Number of Clients |
|--|-------------------|
| No | 148 |
| Yes | 56 |
| Unknown | 13 |
| Total | 217 |

Most clients, 68 percent, did not feel that their attorney had kept them informed of the case.

