

# Behavioral Health, Service Utilization, and Barriers to Care: A Study of Formerly Incarcerated Women

What obstacles do women who were formerly incarcerated face when attempting to access appropriate healthcare?



M. Kathryn Allison, Ph.D., M.P.H., Marley F. Fradley, Whitney K. Norris, Ed.S., and Melissa J. Zielinski, Ph.D.

## Background

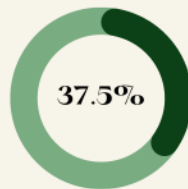
Justice-involved women face a number of barriers to receiving care in their communities.

## Methods

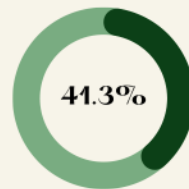
66 formerly incarcerated women were interviewed and surveyed about their healthcare service utilization and experiences accessing care post-release, as well as sociodemographic information, mental health, substance use, and incarceration history.

## Results

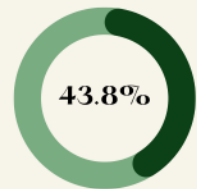
**"The kids got to come first, and food on the table and bills, so health needs come last."**



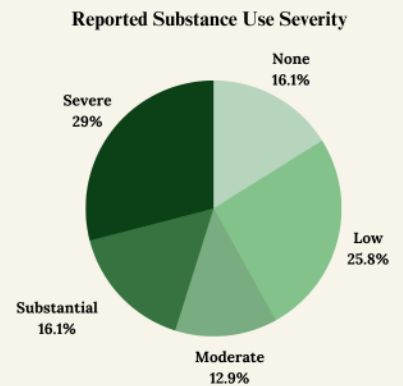
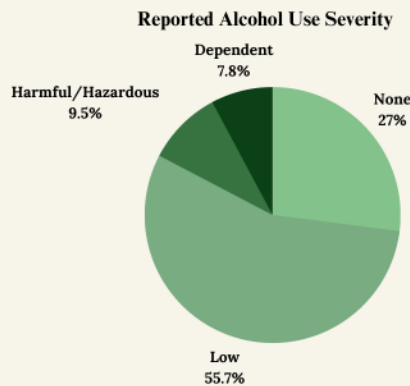
Of our participants scored above the cutoff for depression



Scored above the cutoff for PTSD



Scored above the cutoff for anxiety



### Primary Care

Although over 2/3 of our participants reported having a primary care physician, they also reported several barriers to attending appointments, such as insurance and transportation limitations.



### Life Transitions/Stressors

Cited barriers to health care included major life transitions and stressors, such as reincarceration, divorce, relocation, and losing a job.



### Stigma

Formerly incarcerated women with substance use histories perceived stigma among healthcare providers when accessing basic care.

## Conclusions



Our study highlighted the difficulties women face post-release from incarceration. Many prioritize family and work obligations over their own healthcare needs.



Participants voiced the need for information about their health insurance coverage, mental health care services available, and a societal change in attitudes towards formerly incarcerated people.



Women need healthcare resources immediately upon release from incarceration, as well as longer-term support in the years following incarceration.