

# Emotional and Behavioral Health Among Pulaski County Jail Detainees

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## Study Aims and Methods

The study sought to describe the behavioral health profiles of people who are incarcerated at the Pulaski County Regional Detention Facility.

We screened for common emotional and behavioral health disorders including depression, anxiety, PTSD, and problematic drug use.

We also asked about factors that are known to influence behavioral health (such as adverse life experiences) and collected basic demographic information.

All interested adult detainees who had been in the facility for at least 24 hours, spoke English, could consent, and did not pose a risk to the study team were eligible to participate.

Participation involved meeting with 1-2 research team members for a one-time study visit.

A total of **179** people participated in the study between June 2018 and March 2019.

## PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION



- **Average age was 37.94 (18-59)**
- **66.7% male**
- 33.3% female
- **43.4% Black**
- 35.8% White
- **80.2% NOT Hispanic/Latino**



- **49.7% single/never married**
- **74.3% had 1 or more child**
- 70.9% had a child under 18



- **41.6% rented house or apartment**
- 26% stayed with others
- 18.5% owned house or apartment



- **28% reported some college completion**
- 21% additional graduated high school or earned a GED



- **64.3% were employed**

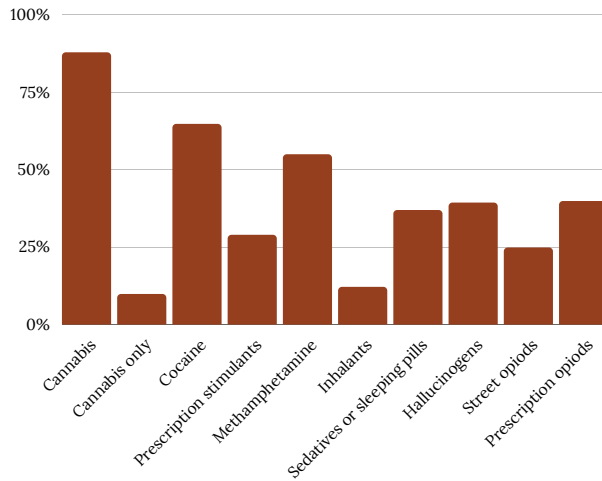


- **73.0% had health insurance**

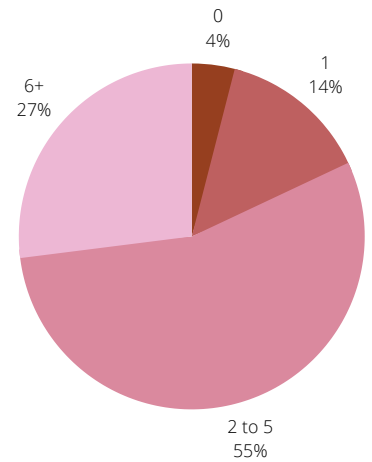
### LIFETIME DRUG USE HISTORY

- Cannabis was the most prevalent drug used by participants who responded, with 152 (84.9%) reported using it at least once in their lifetime
  - However, relatively few participants had used cannabis only (10%)
- Cocaine (64.7%) and methamphetamine (55.2%) were the second and third most prevalent drugs used at least once by participants who responded

LIFETIME DRUG USE - CATEGORIES

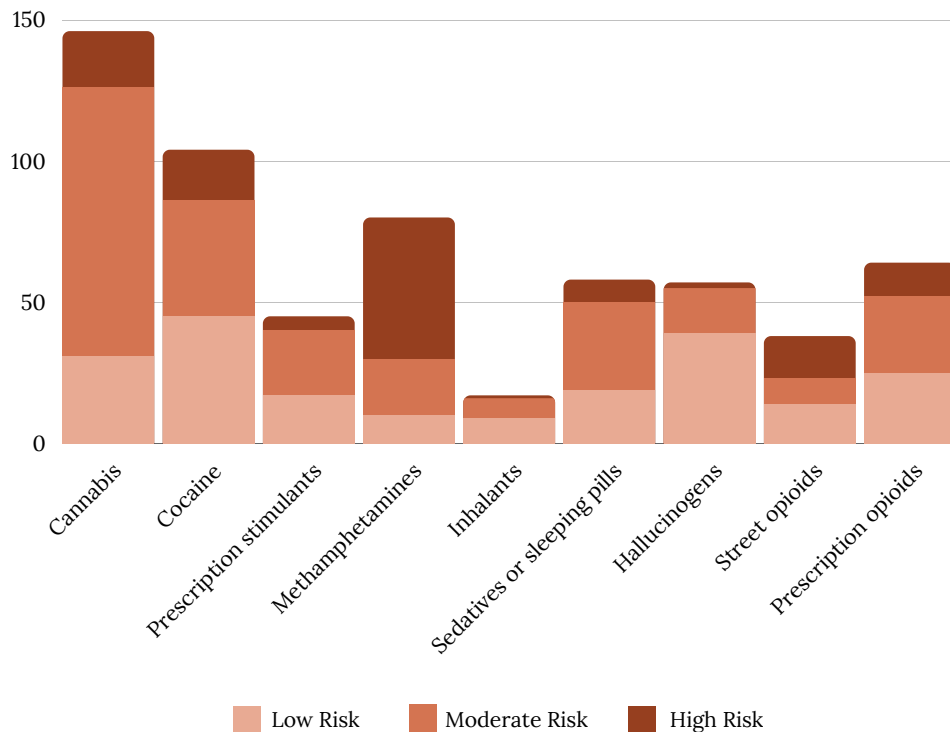


NUMBER OF DRUGS USED



### CURRENT DRUG USE SEVERITY

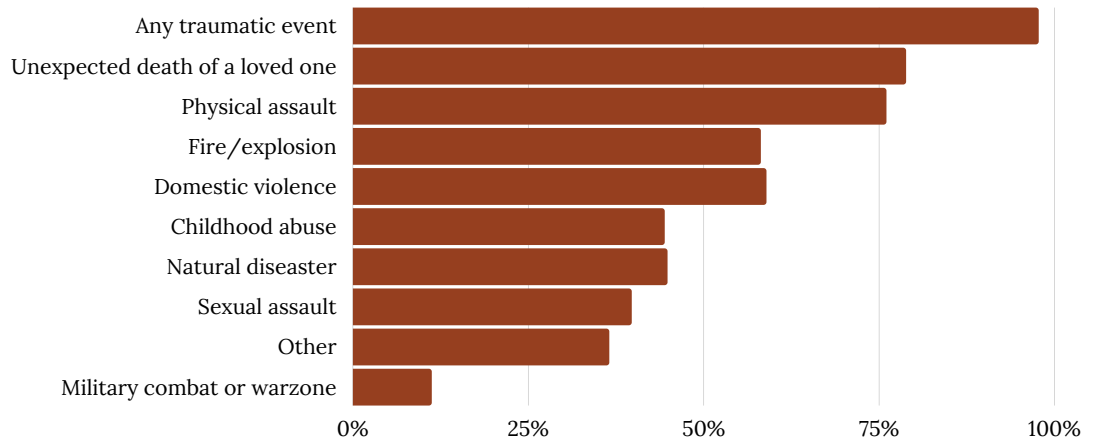
- Per our assessment tool, the NIDA-Modified ASSIST, methamphetamine had the highest number (53.8%) of high-risk users



## DESCRIPTION OF TRAUMA HISTORIES

### Traumatic Event Exposure, by Type

- **Nearly all participants reported at least one traumatic event (97.7%)**
- Unexpected death of a loved one (81.0%) and physical assault (77.7%) were the two most commonly endorsed events



## MENTAL HEALTH SYMPTOM ASSESSMENTS

### Presence of Clinically Significant Mental Health Symptoms

- Participants reported experiencing much higher rates of current mental health symptoms than found in general community samples. This includes:



**50.3% screened positive  
for Depression**



**44.2% screened positive  
for PTSD**



**62.6% screened positive  
for Anxiety**

## INTEREST IN JAIL PROGRAMS

- A sub-sample of participants answered questions about jail programs.
- **96.8% reported wishing that there were more programs available in jail.**
- **When asked what types of programs they wished existed:**
  - **51.6% desired more mental/emotional health programs**
  - **49.5% desired more substance use treatment programs**
  - 37.6% desired more physical/medical health programs
  - 29.0% desired more educational programs
  - 26.9% desired more reentry assistance programs
  - Other programs mentioned were: family and social support programs (18.3%), recreation programs (16.1%), nutritional programs (11.8%), religious/spiritual programs (10.8%), and meditation/relaxation programs (4.3%).

## **Report Context and Recommendations**

People who are incarcerated face serious physical and mental health challenges compared to society at large. The prevalence of mental and physical illnesses are much higher among incarcerated populations. Similarly, the rates of adverse life experiences—including exposure to traumatic events such as sexual assault and abuse—is well above rates reported in the community. These trends were replicated in this study indicating that the same is true for people in the Pulaski County Jail.

Together, these findings point to a clear need for more treatment programs geared toward serving detainees' health needs. Our data also indicates that detainees want such programs—particularly programs focused on mental health improvement and substance use treatment. Partnerships will be necessary to provide all that is needed and desired.

Please contact Dr. Melissa Zielinski, Director of UAMS' HEALS Lab, via email for more information or for more copies of this report.  
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