

Jail Inmates

Compiled by Dale Pace (Sept. 2000) using HCDC annual reports and from the 1996 national profile of jail inmates
Only points noted as specific to HCDC are directly applicable to HCDC; other points are generalizations

Age: three roughly equal-sized groups: under 25, 25-35, and over 35

Education: half – some high school or less, half – high school graduate (15% some college)
10-20% are functionally illiterate

Marital Status: less than one in five currently married; half never married

Income: more than half had poverty-level income the month before current arrest
About half are from families receiving some form of public assistance

Offense for which confined: four roughly equal-sized groups

Violent offenses (homicide, sexual assault, robbery, assault, etc.) – men more likely than women

Property offenses (burglary, larceny/theft, car theft, fraud, etc.)

Drug offenses (possession, trafficking, etc.)

Public-order offenses (weapon possession, DWI/DUI, traffic violation, drunkenness, etc.)

Prior Drug Use: four-fifths have used drugs sometime, and three-fifths use drugs regularly

Under the influence at time of crime: of alcohol – two-fifths, of drugs – one third

Three-fifths consume alcohol regularly

Had substance abuse treatment: two-fifths

Past Criminality: three roughly equal-sized groups

No previous sentence, violent recidivists, and nonviolent recidivists

Two-fifths have served 3 or more sentences

Half come from families in which other members have been incarcerated

Detention Status: two-fifths unconvicted, half sentenced, one tenth convicted awaiting sentence

Length of Sentence:

¼ – less than three months, ½ – three months to a year, ¼ – more than a year
nationally only one in ten are sentenced to prisons (even lower in Howard County)

Danger in jail:

One in twenty will be hurt in a fight or assault while incarcerated

One in twenty will be injured accidentally while incarcerated

Personal and Family Background:

Reared in home with: two parents (two-fifths), one-parent (half), no parents (one in ten)

Half of female inmates report physical or sexual abuse

One-third of inmates report a physical or mental disability

¼ of inmates had received treatment for a mental or emotional problem

half do something religious in jail (attend religious services, pray, meditate, etc.)

at HCDC: half from Howard County, one-third from Baltimore, rest from elsewhere

at HCDC: about half are white and half are black

at HCDC: response to CJM programs is roughly proportional to ethnic representation

Observations:

- Power of Christ to save has shown truth of II Corinthians 5:17 in that all kinds of inmates and former inmates have been saved and transformed.
- Effective ministry that disciplines as well as evangelizes must come to grips with addictions, and provide the kind of resource-intensive help that seems to work – or there will be little lasting transformations of lives (Christians and churches must be willing to pay the price for meaningful ministry).

- People from middle-class circumstances should expect culture shock in this ministry.