

## **Impacts of incarceration on drug use and health outcomes among a cohort of people who inject drugs in Australia**

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**Introduction:** There is limited research on the long-term impacts of incarceration on the health and drug use trajectories of people who inject drugs. We present a preliminary examination of the impacts of incarceration on the patterns of drug use and health outcomes among the Melbourne Injecting Drug User Cohort Study (SuperMIX).

**Method:** SuperMIX involves baseline and annual follow-up interviews with a sample of 1328 people who inject drugs in Melbourne Australia. Data on demographics, drug use, health service use and criminal justice system interactions are collected. We provide a descriptive account of lifetime incarceration at baseline recruitment, total incarceration episodes and associations between lifetime incarceration and a range of health and social factors using logistic regression.

**Results:** Overall, 872 (65.7%) participants reported a history of incarceration at recruitment. Participants reported a total of 2260 episodes of incarceration lasting a median of 91 days (range <1 day-14 years). One quarter of participants reported injecting drugs while incarcerated (n=235, 25.8%). Participants with a history of incarceration at recruitment were more likely to be male, identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, have lower levels of education, be unemployed, report experiencing unstable accommodation and younger age at first injection of drugs.

**Discussions and Conclusions:** We observed high rates of incarceration in SuperMIX. There were key differences in the baseline characteristics of participants who had experienced incarceration, linked in part to characteristics indicating marginalisation.

**Implications for Policy:** Policies to reduce observed high rates of incarceration among people who inject drugs in Australia are urgently needed.

**Disclosure of Interest Statement:**