

People with disabilities more likely to be arrested

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People with disabilities face all sorts of discrimination every day. New Cornell University research suggests they may also face it while interacting with the police.

People with [disabilities](#) in the study - including emotional, physical, cognitive or sensory disabilities - were nearly 44 percent more likely to be arrested by age 28, while those without had a lower probability of [arrest](#), at 30 percent.

This "disability penalty" was strongest for African-American men.

Black men with disabilities in the study were at a particularly high risk of arrest: 55 percent had been arrested by age 28. In contrast, 27.5 percent of whites in the study who had no disability had been arrested by that age.

The research was published this month in the *American Journal of Public Health*.

"I expected to find that people with disabilities would be more likely to be arrested, but I was frankly shocked by how large the disparity was," said author Erin McCauley, a doctoral candidate in the field of policy analysis and management.

"These findings really point to a problem," she said. "For people with disabilities, particularly men of color, the experience of arrest is

extraordinarily common. They are constantly exposed to this risk."

And because the types of disability were evenly distributed across all races, the difference in the probabilities of arrest between whites and blacks is likely due to racial discrimination, she said.

The findings have [public health](#) implications, she said.

For example, police training should put stronger emphasis on de-escalation, minimizing the use of force, and the role of implicit bias in [police](#) interactions, she said. In the paper, she wrote: "Police officers should understand how disabilities may affect compliance and other behaviors, and likewise how implicit bias and structural racism may affect reactions and actions of officers and the systems they work within in ways that create inequities."

And ensuring high-quality care could decrease how frequently and closely people with disabilities come into contact with the criminal justice system, she said.

"For many with disabilities, quality health care is imperative for positive functioning within the community through increasing access to medication and support services," she wrote.

Provided by Cornell University

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