

World-first research into injury rates among people released from prison

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Centre for Mental Health Research Fellow Mr Jesse Young led a study that identified hospital records for 1307 people released from seven Queensland prisons from 1 August 2008 to 31 July 2010.

The study, published today in *The Lancet Public Health*, found:

- Among the 1307 released from [prison](#), 407 suffered 898 injuries resulting in hospital contact
- Of the 407, 122 had both [mental illness](#) and substance use problems; 35 had mental illness only; 82 had [substance use disorder](#) only
- People released from prison were injured and required hospital contact once every five months
- 227 of the 1307 people had dual diagnosis of mental illness and substance use problems, 99 had mental illness only, 314 had substance use disorder only, and 617 had no recent history of mental disorder
- After release from prison, those with both [mental health](#) and substance use disorders were injured at three times the rate of those released from prison with no [mental health problems](#), and more than 10 times the rate of adults in the community
- One in five adults released from prison had a recent history of both mental illness and substance use disorder, which is 10 times higher than the estimated rate among the general Australian population

"Injury is one of the major causes of death and disability globally," Mr Young said.

"It can often result in hospitalisation which can, in turn, be very costly to society. Currently it's estimated to cost more than \$4 billion in direct [health](#) care every year in Australia. On average, a hospital bed costs \$1840 a day."

Although risky drug use was a health concern for many people released from prison, Mr Young said injury from causes other than drugs accounted for nine out of 10 injury events over the study period.

"To our knowledge there are few interventions that target injury from causes other than substance use for people transitioning from prison to the community," Mr Young said.

"Our findings show that some of the most vulnerable people released from prison experience an extremely high burden of injury in the community. For the first time we have shown specific groups and time periods where the risk of [injury](#) is greatest after release from prison," he said.

Mr Young said he hoped the study would be used to direct resources to those at greatest risk.

"Continuous care between prison and community mental health and addiction services is urgently needed. This would not only benefit those vulnerable individuals but would reduce public healthcare costs. Spending in this area should be a public health priority," he said.

More information: Jesse T Young et al, Dual diagnosis of mental illness and substance use disorder and injury in adults recently released from prison: a prospective cohort study, *The Lancet Public Health*

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