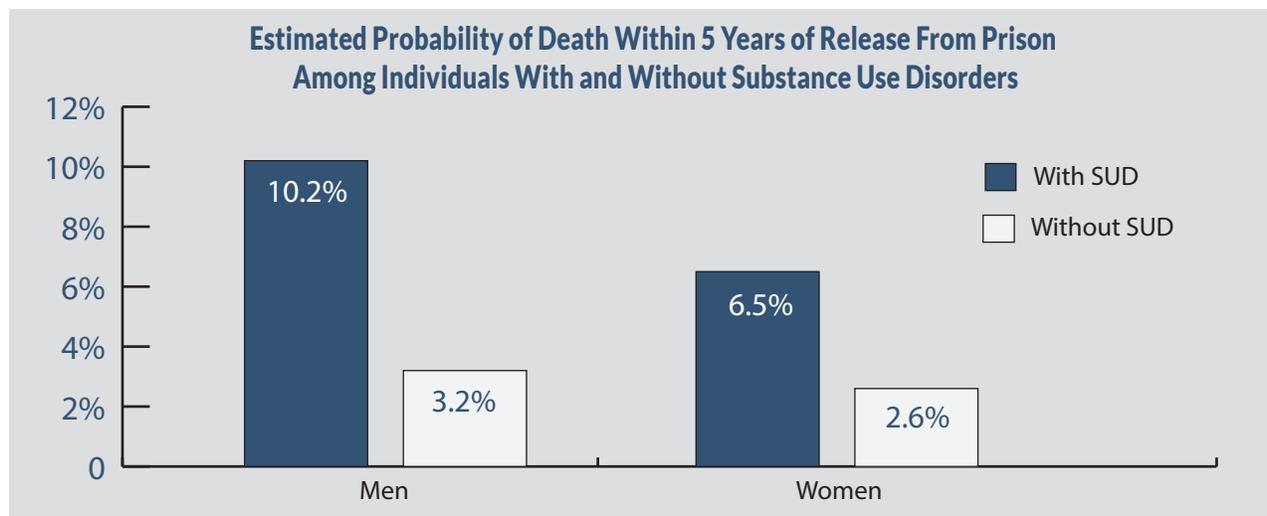




Substance Use Disorder Associated with Increased Risk of Death Long After Release from Prison

A study following individuals in Sweden long after they were released from prison found that those with previous diagnoses of substance use disorders (SUD)¹ were significantly more likely to die than their peers without such diagnoses. According to a recent report in *The Lancet Psychiatry*, researchers analyzed health, social, and criminal justice data related to all individuals who were imprisoned in Sweden since January 1, 2000, and released before December 31, 2009 (N=47,326), following them from the day of release until either death, emigration from Sweden, or the end of the study.² The estimated probability of death within 5 years of release from prison was 10.2% among men with SUD, compared to 3.2% among those without. For women, the estimated probability was 6.5% for those with SUD, compared to 2.6% among those without. The association remained after adjusting for possible confounding factors (e.g., sociodemographic, criminological, and familial). Authors noted that these results demonstrate the persistent effect of SUD on risk of mortality after release from imprisonment, suggesting the need for intervention beyond the immediate period after incarceration, as well as the potential health benefits of alternatives to imprisonment, such as diversion to treatment or community-based drug monitoring.



Source:

Chang, Z., Lichtenstein, P., Larsson, H., and Fazel, S. (2015). Substance use disorders, psychiatric disorders, and mortality after release from prison: a nationwide longitudinal cohort study. *The Lancet Psychiatry* 2(5), 422-430. DOI: 10.1016/S2215-0366(15)00088-7.

Notes:

¹ Among men and women in the study group, 21% and 28% were found to have had alcohol use disorders, and 22% and 41% were found to have had other drug use disorders, respectively. Substance use disorder was defined as any diagnosis of alcohol or drug use disorders.

² Researchers obtained records related to criminal conviction, psychiatric diagnoses and care, causes of death, income, marital status, employment status, education, and siblings in prison. They calculated mortality for individuals released from prison with and without substance use disorders, and with and without other psychiatric disorders. They identified no strong evidence that non-SUD psychiatric disorders increased mortality.

Prepared by the Center for Health and Justice (CHJ) at TASC. CHJ works to support and sustain strong and vibrant communities by promoting policies and practices that stop the cycle of drugs and crime. We conduct research and evaluations, and offer policy analysis, training, and consultation in the fields of health and justice. For more information, visit us online at www.centerforhealthandjustice.org.

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