Police Contacts and the Mental Health of New Yorkers

People with mental health conditions are over-represented in the criminal legal system, which can exacerbate the severity of these conditions. A recent study of New Yorkers looked at the relationship between police contacts and health. This fact sheet describes findings related to mental health.

Did You Know?

1 in 3 New Yorkers reported being stopped by the police. These New Yorkers were 1.5 times more likely to report poor mental health than those who were not stopped.*

1 in 10 New Yorkers reported being abused or threatened by the police. These New Yorkers were over 2 times more likely to report serious psychological distress, compared to New Yorkers who were not abused.*

1 in 5 New Yorkers reported experiencing racial discrimination by the police or in the courts. These New Yorkers were 1.5 times more likely to report poor mental health, compared to New Yorkers who did not experience this discrimination.*

Approaches and Alternatives

There are many community-driven programs that can effectively address mental health:
- Community-based and person-centered alternatives to avoidable emergency room visits and criminal legal interventions for people with mental health and substance use disorders. (e.g. Peer Support Specialists)
- Dispatching health professionals for mental health or substance use crises intervention and support (e.g., HEAT, BHeard)

*Prevalence among NYC adults in 2017
Information presented here reflect results from a published study.
For more please go to nyam.org/hd4nyc/our-work/