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## Drug Court Versus Incarceration: Which Is More Effective?

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# Drug Court Versus Incarceration: Which Is More Effective?

## **Authors**

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## Abstract

**Aim:** This study explores the affect drug court treatment programs have on the sobriety and employment status of the participants.

**Background:** Drug addiction has been an ongoing issue nationwide, and with addiction comes drug related crimes. Currently the preferred solution to this epidemic is to impose longer and longer lengths of incarceration for every incurred infraction.

**Methods:** A descriptive correlational design will be used for this research study to evaluate the effectiveness of drug court compared to incarceration. The participants will be chosen by a random sampling of 100 residents of the Hampton Roads area of Virginia--50 who have graduated drug court and 50 who were incarcerated for drug-related offenses. Each participant must be a legal resident of Virginia for at least 3 years. The participants will be given a close-ended, 18-question questionnaire, titled "One Year Evaluation Post Drug Court." The questionnaire will be designed to determine the participants' life one year after graduating from a drug court program or one year after incarceration for a drug-related offense, possible drug and alcohol relapse, and questions on their demographics.

**Analysis:** An analysis will be conducted using descriptive and inferential statistics. A demographic profile will be constructed of the population's gender, age, ethnicity, level of education, and marital status. The data will be organized using frequency distribution to compare employment status and sobriety of each group. It will be a ratio measurement, and a dependent t-test will be used to verify the means of each group are statistically different.

**Expected findings:** It is expected that findings will show participation in drug court reduces the rate of recidivism and increases the rate of sobriety maintenance more than incarceration in drug-addicted individuals.

**Limitations:** This study is limited due to the self-reporting nature of questionnaires and small sample size.



## Background

- Drug addiction affects millions of Americans nationwide.
- Among Americans aged 12 or older, the use of illicit drugs has increased over the last decade from 8.3% of the population using illicit drugs in the past month in 2002 to 10.2% in 2014; of those, 7.1 million people met criteria for an illicit drug use disorder in the past year.
- Drug courts are a different approach to treating drug addiction than traditional courts.
- A literature review demonstrates drug court being more beneficial than incarceration.
- Long-term effects of drug court are still needed.

## Methods

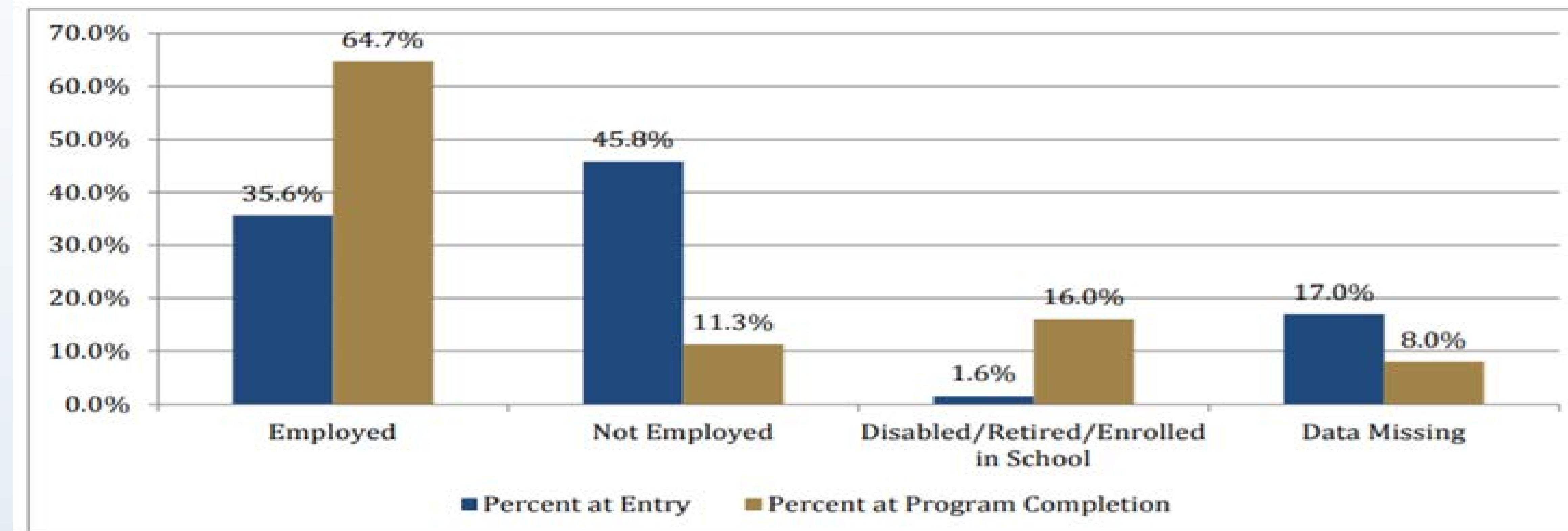
- **Design:** Quantitative descriptive/correlational
- **Sample:** The population selected for this study are individuals who completed a drug court program and individuals who were incarcerated for drug-related crimes in the past year.
- **Participants:** Each participant must be a legal resident of Virginia for at least 3 years. They must have successfully completed the drug court course or have been incarcerated but are no longer at this time.
- **Procedure:** 18-question survey

## Analysis

A demographic profile will be produced to illustrate breakdowns of gender, age, ethnicity, level of education, and marital status. A comparison will be made between the two populations. The data will be organized using frequency distribution to compare employment status and sobriety of each group. The participants' employment status and sobriety will be ratio measurement. A dependent t-test will be used to verify the means of each group are statistically different.

## Drug Court Statistic

Figure 15: Percent of Drug Court Participants Employed at Program Entry and Program Completion



## Conclusion

- Drug treatment courts (DTCs) are an alternative to traditional courts for drug abusers.
- The treatment is a multifaceted, collaborative, and an individualized process, employing a multidisciplinary drug-court team (judge, treatment professionals, probation officers) to meet the drug offender's psychosocial, financial, physical, spiritual needs to correct behaviour.
- DTCs vigilantly monitor the offender's progress via drug testing (urinalysis) and immediate penalties are given as necessary for non-compliance or relapse.
- Findings in this study will indicate that DTCs are the more effective intervention of choice compared to its counterpart. Moreover, it is found that the rate of sobriety is increased, while reducing the rate of recidivism.



## Interprofessional

- Many individuals that have substance use related disorders also have co-occurring mental illness disorders.
- Prison seems to be the most used intervention to "motivate" recovery in individuals found guilty of a crime due to substance use.
- The problem is that there are so many different reasons for why a person chooses to use substances.
- Drug court utilizes an integrated team of professionals from different fields to address the multiple factors for the substance use of an individual.

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