

TSSW professor publishes study on employment and health outcomes for parolees

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Tulane School of Social Work [Associate Professor Audrey Hang Hai, PhD, LMSW](#), recently published an examination of the intersection between employment, community supervision, and health outcomes for adults under criminal justice system control in the United States in the renowned [Journal of Public Health](#).

The article, "Employment and mental health for adults on probation, 2002–2021," addresses two pressing societal issues: the decline in employment rates and the rise in incarceration. It highlights the profound challenges these trends pose for public health, focusing specifically on individuals under community supervision, such as probation. Using data from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health spanning from 2002 to 2021, the study offers valuable insights into the employment and health disparities faced by this population.

Key findings from the research include:

- Individuals under probation were found to be twice as likely to live in poverty compared to those not under supervision.
- This group also exhibited significantly higher rates of poor mental and behavioral health, including three times the rate of substance use, when compared to those not involved in the criminal justice system.
- Despite these stark health disparities, employment rates among individuals on probation were nearly equivalent to those of individuals not under community supervision, suggesting that employment alone does not protect against the broader social and health challenges faced by this population.
- While individuals under community supervision faced higher health risks, protective factors such as mental health support and substance use prevention were less effective in mitigating these risks.

The study's conclusions emphasize the need for more comprehensive public health and social support interventions for individuals under criminal justice system control. While these individuals may not face significantly lower employment rates, they are disproportionately affected by poverty and health challenges, which can make it more difficult for them to escape cycles of disadvantage.

Dr. Hai's timely and thought-provoking article contributes significantly to the growing body of research on the intersection of criminal justice, employment, and public health.