

# STIGMA AS A BARRIER TO CARE AMONG JUSTICE-INVOLVED INDIVIDUALS LIVING WITH OR AT RISK FOR HIV AND SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER

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## Introduction

- 1 in 7 individuals living with HIV<sup>1</sup> and one-third of all opioid users<sup>2</sup> in the U.S. pass through the criminal justice system each year.
- It is vital to provide justice-involved (JI) individuals living with HIV and/or substance use disorder (SUD) with linkage to care upon community re-entry.
- There are endless barriers preventing this population from receiving proper care after release. A less examined barrier is stigma and its impact on health service engagement.
- People with a history of incarceration, who use drugs, and/or are living with HIV often experience multiple layers of stigma related to their history. This intersectional stigma may impact health utilization and health outcomes.<sup>3,4</sup>
- This study aims to investigate the differences in types of stigma as a barrier to care among a population of JI individuals randomized to two health delivery models.

## Results

- Women (M = 3.06, SD = 1.00; M = 3.27, SD = 1.03) reported both higher Anticipated Stigma and Internalized Stigma when compared to their male counterparts (M = 2.67, SD = 1.01; M = 2.86, SD = 1.08),  $t(352) = \geq 3.02$ ,  $p = \leq 0.001$ .
- Participants who were in a controlled setting (M = 2.61, SD = 0.94; M = 2.80, SD = 1.04) were also found to report higher Anticipated Stigma and Internalized Stigma than those under community supervision (M = 2.91, SD = 1.08; M = 3.10, SD = 1.09),  $t(350) = \geq 2.61$ ,  $p = \leq 0.005$ .
- Of the 356 enrolled participants, 81 were women (22.8%) and 274 were men (77%). 174 were in a controlled setting (e.g. justice system or court-appointed housing) and 178 were in an uncontrolled setting under community supervision, likely on parole.
- Scan QR code for the full demographics table:



Table 1

### Descriptive Statistics of ACTION Stigma Scale

	Mean (SD)	33 <sup>rd</sup> percentile	67 <sup>th</sup> percentile	$\alpha$
Anticipated Stigma	2.76 (1.02)	2.33	3.17	0.82
Internalized Stigma	2.96 (1.08)	2.35	3.50	0.87

SD = standard deviation.  $\alpha$  = Cronbach's alpha.

## Conclusion

- The baseline data reveal both Anticipated Stigma and Internalized Stigma are significantly higher (1) among women compared to men and (2) among those in a controlled setting compared to those under community supervision (probation or parole).
- Despite the literature surrounding stigma in healthcare growing, there is less research involving this unique population who experience three different layers of stigma: HIV, substance use, and justice involvement.
- The ways in which stigma related to sex and parole status specifically may impact health utilization and health outcomes should be further examined.

## Future Directions

- We hope to explore stigma dynamics among participants once recruited and randomized into either of the two intervention models (MHU vs. PN).
- By examining how stigma fits into the broader context of these intervention modes is crucial to enhancing the models for future implementation.

## Methods

- 356 individuals with recent involvement with the criminal justice system, history of opioid/stimulant use and HIV risk behavior in 2 regions Texas and 2 regions of Connecticut were identified as part of the "Addressing Risk Through Community Treatment for Infectious Disease and Opioid Use Disorder Now Among Justice-Involved Populations" (ACTION)<sup>5</sup> study.
- Participants' baseline stigma was examined using the ACTION Stigma Scale.
- A combination of correlation analyses and independent samples t-tests were used to explore whether stigma scores varied as a function of participants' sociodemographic information.
- *Anticipated Stigma*: reflects expectations of stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination from others in the future due to one's stigmatized attributes.<sup>6</sup>
- *Internalized Stigma*: the endorsement and application of negative feelings and beliefs about people who use drugs to oneself.<sup>5</sup>

Figure 1

### Mean Stigma Scores by Sex

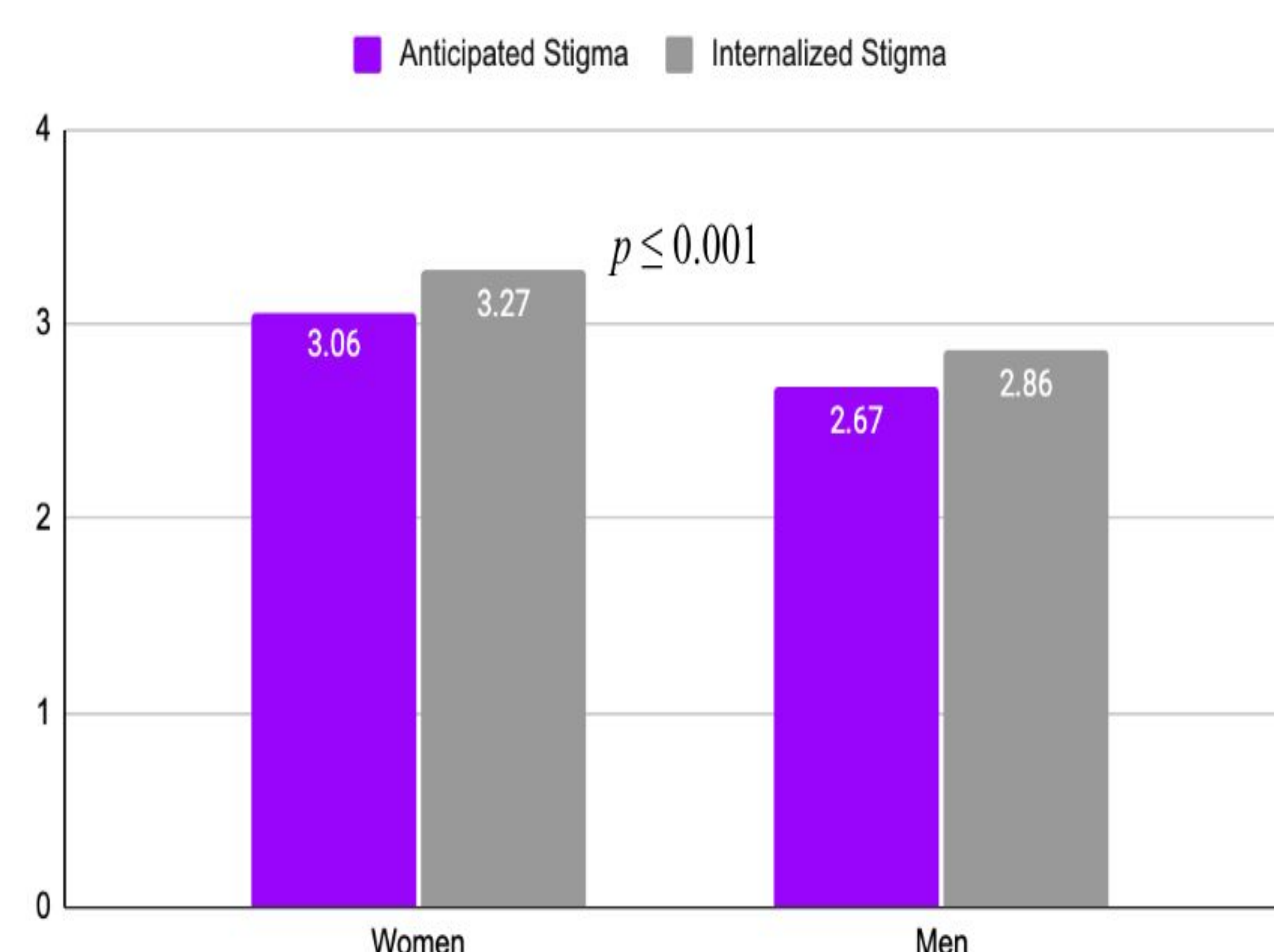
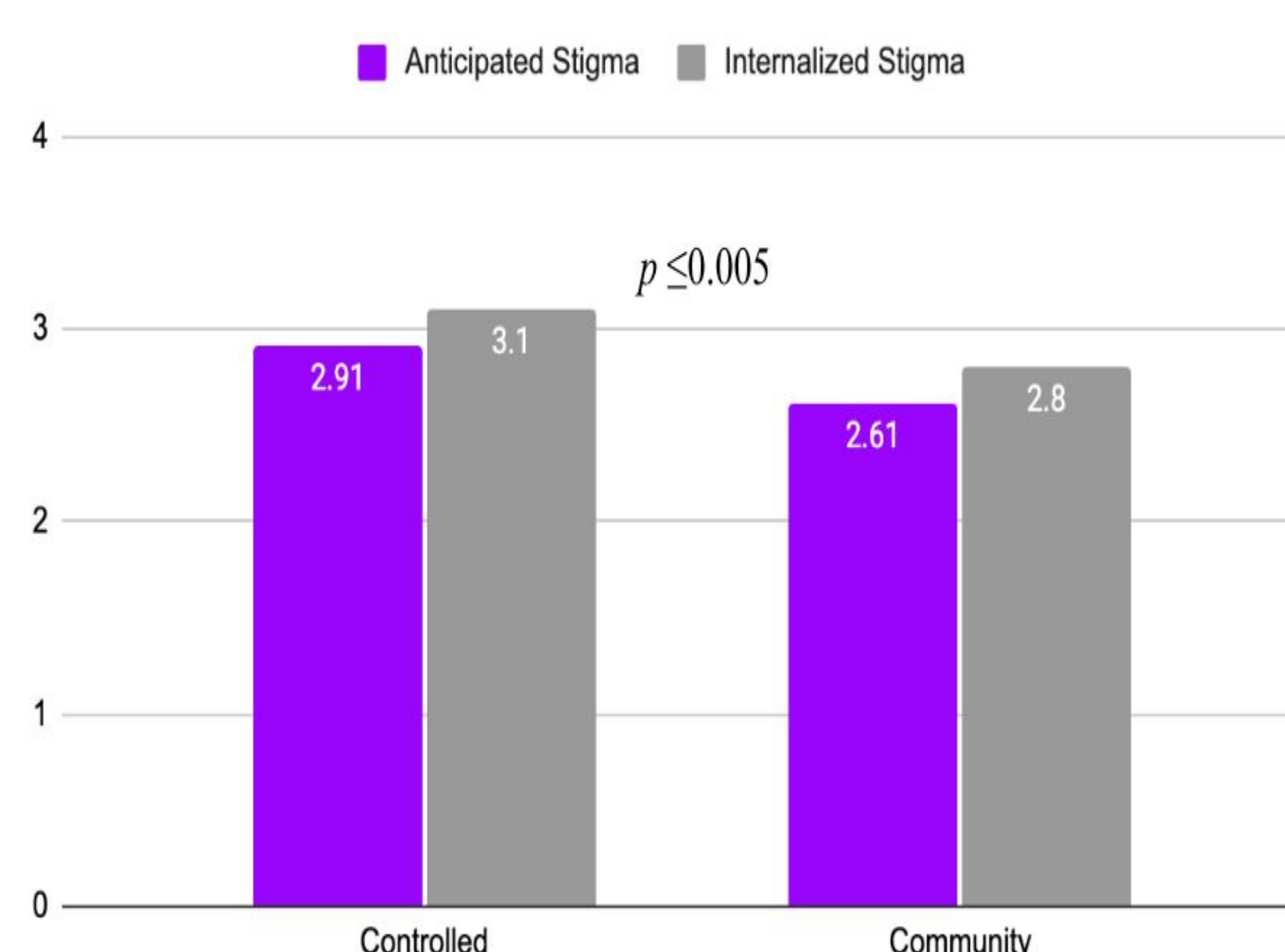


Figure 2

### Mean Stigma Scores by Supervision Status



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