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BUREAU OF JUSTICE STATISTICS
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4.5 PERCENT OF INMATES REPORT SEXUAL VICTIMIZATION IN THE NATION'S STATE AND FEDERAL PRISONS

WASHINGTON – An estimated 4.5 percent of state and federal prisoners reported a sexual victimization in a survey mandated by the Prison Rape Elimination Act, the Justice Department's Bureau of Justice Statistics announced today. About 2.1 percent of all inmates reported an incident involving another inmate, and 2.9 percent reported an incident involving facility staff members. An estimated 0.5 percent of inmates reported being sexually victimized by both another inmate and by facility staff. In half of staff sexual contacts (1.7 percent) the inmates said they were "willing."

The survey was conducted in 146 state and federal prisons between April and August 2007, with a sample of 23,398 inmates. Ten prison facilities had the highest sexual victimization rate, ranging from 9.3 percent in the Coffield Unit in Texas to 15.7 percent in the Estelle Unit in Texas. There were six facilities in which no inmates reported any incidents of sexual victimization.

The inmates reported an estimated 56 incidents of inmate-on-inmate nonconsensual acts per 1,000 inmates. They also reported an estimated 85 incidents of unwilling sexual contacts with staff members per 1,000 inmates and 82 incidents of "willing" sexual contacts with staff per 1,000 inmates.

An estimated 0.8 percent of inmates nationwide reported being injured by the sexual victimization, approximately 0.5 percent by other inmates and 0.3 percent by staff members. Injuries included anal or vaginal tearing, knife or stab punctures, broken bones, bruises, black eyes and other less serious injuries.

The survey consisted of an audio computer-assisted self interview (ACASI) in which inmates, using a touch-screen laptop, interacted with a computer-assisted questionnaire and followed instructions via headphones. All of the selected State and Federal prisons permitted the survey to be conducted. While inmate participation was voluntary, 72 percent completed the survey.

(MORE)

Survey responses represent inmate allegations. Despite efforts to reassure inmates that their reports would be kept confidential, some inmates may not have felt confident in reporting their experiences. At the same time, some inmates may have made false allegations. Based on administrative surveys in 2006, about a quarter of the allegations brought to the attention of correctional authorities were determined to be unfounded (not to have occurred).

The Act establishes a zero-tolerance standard for the incidence of rape in prisons in the U.S. and requires BJS to conduct an annual data collection to measure the incidence of prison rape in at least 10 percent of the nation's correctional facilities. It also requires the Attorney General to provide a listing of institutions ranked according to the incidence of prison rape.

As a consequence of sampling error, the survey cannot provide an exact ranking for all facilities as required under the Act. Furthermore, it does not allow a definitive identification of the three prison facilities with the highest rates of sexual victimization. However, it is possible to statistically identify a small group of facilities with the highest rates of sexual victimization.

Data from local jail inmates are still being collected. Rankings based on a sample of 302 facilities are anticipated next spring.

The report, *Sexual Victimization in State and Federal Prisons Reported by Inmates, 2007* (NCJ-219414) was written by BJS statisticians Allen J. Beck and Paige M. Harrison. Following publication, the reports can be found at www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/svsfpri07.htm

For additional information about the Bureau of Justice Statistics' statistical reports and programs, please visit the BJS Web site at www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs.

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