



# Department of Justice

## Office of Justice Programs



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### **STUDY FINDS MORE THAN HALF OF ALL PRISON AND JAIL INMATES HAVE MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS**

WASHINGTON — More than half of all prison and jail inmates, including 56 percent of state prisoners, 45 percent of federal prisoners and 64 percent of local jail inmates, were found to have a mental health problem, according to a new study published today by the Justice Department's Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS).

The findings represent inmates' reporting symptoms rather than an official diagnosis of a mental illness. The study determined the presence of mental health problems among prison and jail inmates by asking them about a recent history or symptoms of mental disorders that occurred in the last year.

Among the inmates who reported symptoms of a mental disorder:

- 54 percent of local jail inmates had symptoms of mania, 30 percent major depression and 24 percent psychotic disorder, such as delusions or hallucinations.
- 43 percent of state prisoners had symptoms of mania, 23 percent major depression and 15 percent psychotic disorder.
- 35 percent of federal prisoners had symptoms of mania, 16 percent major depression and 10 percent psychotic disorder.

Female inmates had higher rates of mental health problems than male inmates — in state prisons, 73 percent of females and 55 percent of males; in federal prisons, 61 percent of females and 44 percent of males; and in local jails, 75 percent of females and 63 percent of males.

Mental health problems were primarily associated with violence and past criminal activity. An estimated 61 percent of state prisoners and 44 percent of jail inmates who had a mental health problem had a current or past violent offense. About a quarter of both state prisoners (25 percent) and jail inmates (26 percent) had served three or more prior sentences to incarceration.

(MORE)

Inmates with a mental health problem also had high rates of substance dependence or abuse in the year before their admission —

- 74 percent of state prisoners and 76 percent of local jail inmates were dependent on or abusing drugs or alcohol.
- 37 percent of state prisoners and 34 percent of jail inmates said they had used drugs at the time of their offense.
- 13 percent of state prisoners and 12 percent of jail inmates had used methamphetamines in the month before their offense.

Among inmates who had mental health problems, 13 percent of state prisoners and 17 percent of jail inmates said they were homeless in the year before their incarceration. About a quarter of both state prisoners (27 percent) and jail inmates (24 percent) who had a mental health problem reported past physical or sexual abuse.

About one in three state prisoners with mental health problems, one in four federal prisoners and one in six jail inmates had received mental health treatment since admission. Taking a prescribed medication was the most common type of treatment — 27 percent in state prisons, 19 percent in federal prisons, and 15 percent in local jails.

The findings in this report were based on a nationally representative sample of prisoners (in 2004) and jail inmates (in 2002). Approximately 14,500 state prisoners, 3,700 federal prisoners and 7,000 jail inmates completed face-to-face interviews.

The report, "Mental Health Problems of Prison and Jail Inmates" (NCJ-213600) was written by BJS statisticians Doris J. James and Lauren E. Glaze. Following publication, the report can be found at: [www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/mhppji.htm](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/mhppji.htm)

For additional information about the Bureau of Justice Statistics statistical reports programs, please visit the BJS website at: <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs>.

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