

INMATES WITH MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS REPORTED HIGH RATES OF SEXUAL VICTIMIZATION IN 2011-12

WASHINGTON – Prison and jail inmates identified with mental health problems reported higher rates of inmate-on-inmate sexual victimization than inmates without a mental health problem, according to a study released today by the Justice Department’s Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS).

An estimated 6.3 percent of prison inmates and 3.6 percent of jail inmates identified with serious psychological distress reported inmate-on-inmate sexual victimization compared to 0.7 percent for both prison and jail inmates without a mental health problem. Inmates who had been told by a mental health professional that they had a mental disorder reported higher rates of inmate-on-inmate sexual victimization (3.8 percent in prisons and 2.9 percent in jails) than other inmates (0.8 percent in prisons and 0.6 percent in jails).

The study provides findings for the first time on sexual victimization of inmates with mental problems and on juveniles (ages 16 to 17) held in adult facilities. Sexual victimization is defined as all types of unwanted sexual activity with other inmates, abusive sexual activity with other inmates and both willing and unwilling sexual activity with staff.

Juvenile inmates (1.8 percent) reported rates of inmate-on-inmate sexual victimization similar to those of adult inmates. The rate of staff sexual misconduct for jail inmates ages 16 to 17 (3.3 percent) was higher than for jail inmates ages 35 to 44 (1.5 percent), ages 45 to 54 (0.9 percent) and age 55 or older (0.3 percent). For prison inmates, the rate of staff sexual misconduct did not vary among age groups.

Nationwide, 2.0 percent of all prison inmates and 1.6 percent of all jail inmates reported at least one incident involving another inmate; 2.4 percent of prison inmates and 1.8 percent of jail inmates reported having had sex or sexual contact with facility staff. An estimated 80,600 adult inmates—57,900 in prisons and 22,700 in jails—reported experiencing one or more incidents of sexual victimization by another inmate or facility staff during 2011-12.

High rates of inmate-on-inmate sexual victimization were reported by violent sex offenders and inmates who identified their sexual orientation as gay, lesbian, bisexual or other. Inmates held for violent sex offenses reported higher rates of inmate-on-inmate sexual victimization (3.7 percent in prisons and 3.9 percent in jails) than inmates held for other offenses. Inmates who identified their sexual orientation as gay, lesbian, bisexual or other were among inmates with the highest rates of sexual victimization in prisons (12.2 percent) and jails (8.5 percent).

Rates of inmate-on-inmate sexual victimization reported by prison inmates were higher among females (6.9 percent) than males (1.7 percent), higher among whites (2.9 percent) or inmates of two or more races (4.0 percent) than among blacks (1.3 percent) and higher among inmates with a college degree (2.7 percent) than among inmates who had not completed high school (1.9 percent).

Among jail inmates, females (3.6 percent), whites (2.0 percent) and inmates with a college degree (3.0 percent) reported higher rates of inmate-on-inmate victimization than males (1.4 percent), blacks (1.1 percent) and inmates who had not completed high school (1.4 percent).

Rates of staff sexual misconduct were higher among males in jails (1.9 percent) than among females in jails (1.4 percent), and higher among black inmates in prisons (2.6 percent) and jails (2.1 percent) than among white inmates in prisons (1.6 percent) and jails (1.4 percent).

About half of the inmates who reported inmate-on-inmate sexual victimizations—1.1 percent in prisons and 0.7 percent in jails—reported at least one incident of nonconsensual sex, defined as unwanted oral, anal, or vaginal sex, or manual stimulation. About half of the inmates who reported staff sexual misconduct—1.4 percent in prisons and 0.9 percent in jails—said that the sexual contact or activity was willing, though all sexual contact between inmates and staff are legally nonconsensual.

The findings are based on a survey of prison and jail inmates, as part of the Prison Rape Elimination Act data collection activities, about incidents of sexual victimization during the last 12 months or since their admission to the facility, if less than 12 months. BJS surveyed more than 92,449 adult inmates held in 233 state and federal prisons, 358 local jails and 15 special confinement facilities between February 2011 and May 2012.

The report, *Sexual Victimization in Prisons and Jails Reported by Inmates, 2011-12* (NCJ 241399), was written by BJS statistician Allen J. Beck and RTI International staff Marcus Berzofsky, Rachel Caspar and Christopher Krebs. The report, related documents and additional information about the Bureau of Justice Statistics' statistical publications and programs can be found on the BJS website at <http://www.bjs.gov/>.

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