



# Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report

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## Mental Health Problems of Prison and Jail Inmates

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At midyear 2005 more than half of all prison and jail inmates had a mental health problem, including 705,600 inmates in State prisons, 78,800 in Federal prisons, and 479,900 in local jails. These estimates represented 56% of State prisoners, 45% of Federal prisoners, and 64% of jail inmates. The findings in this report were based on data from personal interviews with State and Federal prisoners in 2004 and local jail inmates in 2002.

Mental health problems were defined by two measures: a recent history or symptoms of a mental health problem. They must have occurred in the 12 months prior to the interview. A recent history of mental health problems included a clinical diagnosis or treatment by a mental health professional. Symptoms of a mental disorder were based on criteria specified in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, fourth edition (DSM-IV).

Mental health problem	Percent of inmates in —		
	State prison	Federal prison	Local jail
Any mental problem	56%	45%	64%
Recent history	24	14	21
Symptoms	49	40	60

More than two-fifths of State prisoners (43%) and more than half of jail inmates (54%) reported symptoms that met the criteria for mania. About 23% of State prisoners and 30% of jail inmates reported symptoms of major depression. An estimated 15% of State prisoners and 24% of jail inmates reported symptoms that met the criteria for a psychotic disorder.

### Highlights

#### High prevalence of mental health problems among prison and jail inmates

Selected characteristics	Percent of inmates in —			
	State prison		Local jail	
	With mental problem	Without	With mental problem	Without
<b>Criminal record</b>				
Current or past violent offense	61%	56%	44%	36%
3 or more prior incarcerations	25	19	26	20
<b>Substance dependence or abuse</b>	74%	56%	76%	53%
<b>Drug use in month before arrest</b>	63%	49%	62%	42%
<b>Family background</b>				
Homelessness in year before arrest	13%	6%	17%	9%
Past physical or sexual abuse	27	10	24	8
Parents abused alcohol or drugs	39	25	37	19
<b>Charged with violating facility rules*</b>	58%	43%	19%	9%
Physical or verbal assault	24	14	8	2
<b>Injured in a fight since admission</b>	20%	10%	9%	3%

\*Includes items not shown.

- Nearly a quarter of both State prisoners and jail inmates who had a mental health problem, compared to a fifth of those without, had served 3 or more prior incarcerations.
- Female inmates had higher rates of mental health problems than male inmates (State prisons: 73% of females and 55% of males; local jails: 75% of females and 63% of males).
- About 74% of State prisoners and 76% of local jail inmates who had a mental health problem met criteria for substance dependence or abuse.
- Nearly 63% of State prisoners who had a mental health problem had used drugs in the month before their arrest, compared to 49% of those without a mental health problem.
- State prisoners who had a mental health problem were twice as likely as those without to have been homeless in the year before their arrest (13% compared to 6%).
- Jail inmates who had a mental health problem (24%) were three times as likely as jail inmates without (8%) to report being physically or sexually abused in the past.
- Over 1 in 3 State prisoners and 1 in 6 jail inmates who had a mental health problem had received treatment since admission.
- State prisoners who had a mental health problem were twice as likely as State prisoners without to have been injured in a fight since admission (20% compared to 10%).