

About 1 in 7 state and federal prisoners and 1 in 4 jail inmates self-reported experiences that met the threshold for serious psychological distress (SPD) in the 30 days prior to the Bureau of Justice Statistics' 2011-12 National Inmate Survey. In comparison, data from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health found that about 1 in 19 persons in the standardized U.S. general population met the threshold for SPD.

Prevalence of mental health disorders

More than a third (37%) of prisoners had been told by a mental health professional in the past that they had a mental health disorder. Prisoners were most commonly told they had a major depressive disorder (24%), a bipolar disorder (18%), post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or personality disorder (13%), and schizophrenia or another psychotic disorder (9%).

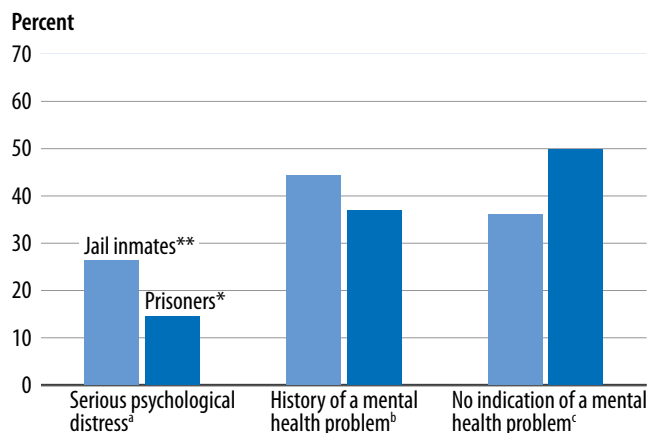
Forty-four percent of jail inmates had been told by a mental health professional in the past that they had a mental health disorder. Nearly a third (31%) of jail inmates had previously been told that they had major depressive disorder and a quarter (25%) had been told they had a bipolar disorder. About 18% of jail inmates had been told they had an anxiety disorder, 16% had been told they had PTSD, and 14% had been told they had a personality disorder.

About the prisoners and jail inmates

Females held in prisons or jails were more likely than males to have met the threshold for SPD or to have a history of a mental health problem. In prisons, 20% of females and 14% of males met the threshold for SPD. Two-thirds (66%) of female prisoners and around a third (35%) of male prisoners had been told by a mental health professional that they had a mental health disorder. In jails, 32% of females and 26% of males met the threshold for SPD. Similarly, 68% of female jail inmates and 41% of male jail inmates had a history of a mental health problem.

Overall, prisoners who were incarcerated for a violent (17%) or property (16%) crime were more likely to have met the threshold for SPD than those incarcerated for DWI/DUI (14%), another public order (13%) offense, or a drug (10%) crime. A similar pattern was observed in jails, where an estimated 29% of inmates incarcerated for a violent offense met the threshold for SPD. This was greater than the

Mental health status of prisoners and jail inmates, by type of mental health indicator, 2011-2012



*Comparison group.

**Difference with the comparison group is significant at the 95% confidence level.

^aIncludes inmates with a score of 13 or more on the K6 scale.

^bIncludes inmates who reported they had ever been told by a mental health professional they had a mental disorder.

^cIncludes inmates with a score of 7 or less on the K6 and who had never been told by a mental health professional they had a mental disorder.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Inmate Survey, 2011-2012.

percentage of jail inmates incarcerated for a property (27%) crime, another public order (26%) offense, a drug (25%) crime, or DWI/DUI (24%).

Mental health treatment

Approximately three-quarters of prisoners (74%) and jail inmates (73%) who met the threshold for SPD said they had received mental health treatment in their lifetime. More than half (54%) of prisoners and a third (35%) of jail inmates who met the threshold for SPD had received mental health treatment since admission to their current facility. Treatments included prescription medication, counseling or therapy, or a combination of the two.

In comparison, 37% of prisoners and 38% of jail inmates who had ever been told they had a mental disorder said they were currently receiving treatment for a mental health problem. An estimated 30% of each group said they were currently taking prescription medication.

The full report (*Indicators of Mental Health Problems Reported by Prisoners and Jail Inmates, 2011-12*, NCJ 250612), related documents, and additional information about the Bureau of Justice Statistics can be found at www.bjs.gov.

