

An estimated 32% of state and federal prisoners and 40% of local jail inmates reported having at least one disability in the 2011–12 National Inmate Survey. Estimates of disabilities include six specific disability types: hearing, vision, cognitive, ambulatory, self-care, and independent living. The disability rate among prisoners was nearly three times the rate of the general population, while the rate among jail inmates was more than four times that of the general population. Disability rates among those in the noninstitutionalized general population come from data in the 2012 American Community Survey (ACS). The general population was standardized to match the prison and jail populations by sex, age, race, and Hispanic origin.

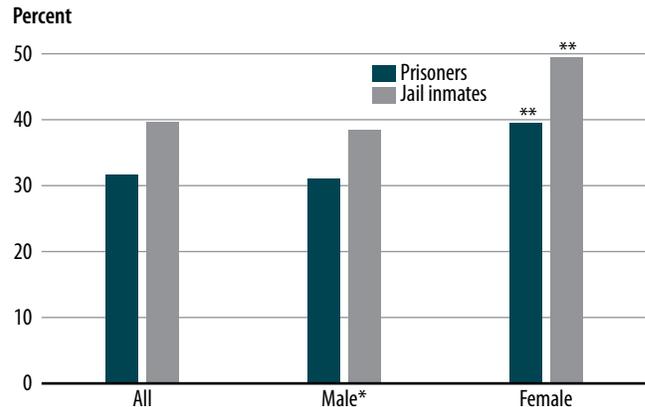
Prevalence of disabilities

A cognitive disability, defined as serious difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions, was the most common disability reported by prisoners (19%) and jail inmates (31%). Among prison and jail inmates, an ambulatory disability was the second most common reported disability, with 10% of each population reporting difficulty walking or climbing stairs. Independent living, vision, hearing, and self-care disabilities each were reported by less than 10% of prison and jail inmates. About 13% of prisoners and 16% of jail inmates reported having multiple disabilities.

Disabilities by inmate characteristics

Among inmates, females were more likely than males to report a disability. An estimated 40% of female prisoners and 31% of male prisoners reported a disability. Among jail inmates, 49% of females reported a disability, compared to 39% of males. For specific disability types, female prisoners were more likely than males to report a cognitive disability, but they were as likely to report having each of the other five disabilities. Non-Hispanic white prisoners (37%) and prisoners of two or more races (42%) were more likely than non-Hispanic black prisoners (26%) to report having a disability. Twenty-eight percent of Hispanic prisoners reported a disability. Among jail inmates, whites (40%) and persons of two or more races (55%) were more likely to report a disability than blacks (35%). Thirty-eight percent of Hispanics in jail reported a disability. Inmates age 50 or older (44% of prisoners and 60% of jail inmates) were more likely than inmates ages 18 to 24 (27% of prisoners and 34% of jail inmates) to report a disability. Inmates of all ages were equally likely to report a cognitive disability.

Prevalence of disabilities among state and federal prisoners and jail inmates, by sex, 2011–12



Note: Disability types include hearing, vision, cognitive, ambulatory, self-care, and independent living.

*Comparison group.

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

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Inmate Survey, 2011–12.

Disabilities and other health conditions

Prison and jail inmates with a disability were more likely than inmates without a disability to have a co-occurring chronic condition, have ever had an infectious disease including tuberculosis, hepatitis B, hepatitis C, or a sexually transmitted infection (excluding HIV), and to report past 30-day serious psychological distress (SPD). More than half of prisoners (54%) and jail inmates (53%) with a disability reported a co-occurring chronic condition, compared to about a third of prisoners (35%) and jail inmates (30%) without a disability. Prisoners with a disability were about four times more likely than those without a disability to report past 30-day SPD. Jail inmates with a disability were nearly 2.5 times more likely than those without a disability to report past SPD. Inmates with a disability were equally likely to be obese or morbidly obese as those without a disability.

The full report (*Disabilities Among Prison and Jail Inmates, 2011–12*, NCJ 249151), related documents, and additional information about the Bureau of Justice Statistics can be found at www.bjs.gov.

