



# Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report

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## Profile of Jail Inmates 1996

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At midyear 1997, 567,079 persons were incarcerated in the Nation's jails. Since 1989, when the last Survey of Inmates in Local Jails (SILJ) was conducted, the population held in the 3,328 jails has increased an average 4.6% a year. Jails, unlike prisons, are locally administered, incarcerating unsentenced individuals and persons serving sentences of a year or less. Prisons typically hold inmates with sentences of more than a year.

Results from the most recent SILJ conducted between October 1995 and March 1996 reveal that two-thirds were convicted on their current offense or serving a sentence for a prior offense; a third were unconvicted, awaiting trial, on trial, or not yet arraigned. The offenses for which inmates were held had remained relatively constant since the 1989 survey. About 26% were being held for a violent offense; 27% for a property offense; 22% for a drug offense; and 24% for a public-order offense. More than half had previously served time in a jail or prison; nearly two-thirds had been on probation.

These findings are based on interviews with a nationally representative sample of over 6,000 inmates from 431 jails. In hour-long interviews inmates provided information on current and past offense histories, drug and alcohol use and treatment, family background, and conditions of confinement.

### Highlights

	Percent of jail inmates	
	1996	1989
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%
<b>Offense</b>		
Violent	26.3%	22.5%
Property	26.9	30.0
Drug	22.0	23.0
Public-order	24.3	22.8
<b>Criminal justice status at arrest</b>		
None	46.4%	53.5%
Status <sup>a</sup>	53.6	46.5
On probation	31.7	--
On parole	13.1	--
On bail/bond	12.7	--
On other pretrial release	4.4	--
<b>Criminal history</b>		
None	27.3%	23.5%
Priors <sup>a</sup>	72.7	76.5
Probation	63.0	62.9
Jail/prison	58.4	56.6
<b>Prior drug use</b>		
Never	17.6%	22.3%
Ever <sup>a</sup>	82.4	77.7
Regularly	64.2	58.0
In month before the offense <sup>b</sup>	55.0	43.8
At time of the offense <sup>b</sup>	35.6	27.0
<b>Under the influence of alcohol at time of the offense<sup>b</sup></b>		
No	59.5%	58.7%
Yes	40.5	41.3
<b>Substance abuse treatment</b>		
Never	57.7%	67.6%
Ever <sup>a</sup>	42.3	32.4
Since admission	10.3	--
Number of inmates	507,026	395,554

--Not available.

<sup>a</sup>Detail may add to more than total; inmates may fit more than one category.

<sup>b</sup>Based on convicted jail inmates only.

- Over half of jail inmates in 1996 were already being supervised by the courts or corrections staff at their most recent arrest — almost a third on probation, an eighth on parole, and an eighth on bail or bond.
- More than 7 of every 10 jail inmates had prior sentences to probation or incarceration. Over 4 in 10 had served 3 or more sentences.
- Compared to jail inmates in 1989, inmates in 1996 reported a higher percentage of use of every type of drug except cocaine. The percentage of inmates ever using marijuana went from 71% in 1989 to 78% in 1996; stimulants, 22% to 34%; hallucinogens, 24% to 32%; depressants, 21% to 30%; and opiates, 19% to 24%. Half of the inmates in both years reported trying cocaine.
- Among convicted inmates who said they used drugs in the month before the offense, 17% had participated in a treatment or self-help program since admission. Self-help groups included 12-step programs like Narcotics/Alcoholics Anonymous.
- Over a third of all inmates reported some physical or mental disability.
- A quarter of the jail inmates said they had been treated at some time for a mental or emotional problem.
- 48% of jailed women reported having been physically or sexually abused prior to admission; 27% had been raped.

**The Survey of Inmates in Local Jails, 1996**

The Survey of Inmates in Local Jails (SILJ), conducted from October 1995 through March 1996, obtained detailed information from a nationally representative sample of jail inmates. Questions were asked about current offenses and sentences, criminal histories, personal and family characteristics, drug and alcohol use and treatment, and health care and other jail conditions since admission. Overall, 6,133 inmates in 431 jails were each interviewed for about an hour. Surveys were also conducted in 1972, 1978, 1983, and 1989, enabling measurement of trends in jail populations.

For the first time in 1996, SILJ interviewers used laptop computers programmed to provide questions and appropriate follow-ups to inmates' responses. Questions new to the survey included the expected date of release, disabilities, welfare benefits, experiences using alcohol and drugs, jail conditions, health assessments and medical and mental health needs and treatment. Other reports on specialized topics from SILJ will follow this report.

During the period when personal interviews were conducted for the SILJ, approximately 3,328 local jails held an estimated 507,026 inmates. The Nation's jail population had grown 28%

from the previous survey of local jail inmates in 1989.

As defined in this report, jails are locally operated correctional facilities that confine persons before or after adjudication. Inmates sentenced to jail usually have a sentence of a year or less, but jails also incarcerate persons in a wide variety of other categories. (See box in the next column.)

**Two-thirds of jail inmates were convicted on their arrest offense or still serving a prior sentence**

Over half of jail inmates were currently serving a sentence for their most recent offense or for a prior conviction for which they were on probation, parole, or other release when admitted to jail (table 1). Approximately 10% were awaiting sentence; 24% had been arraigned and were on or awaiting trial; and 11% were awaiting arraignment.

Approximately 56% of jail inmates in 1996 were convicted of the offense for which they were most recently arrested, unchanged from 1989 (57%).

**Jails held 12% of inmates for other authorities**

An estimated 61,200 jail inmates were held for other authorities in 1996, a 39% increase from the 43,900 in 1989 (table 2). In both years jails held about

6% of their inmates for State correctional authorities and 2% for Federal agencies, including the Federal Bureau of Prisons, the U.S. Marshals Service, and the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Between 3% and 4% of the inmates were under the jurisdiction of other local authorities, primarily other local jails.

**Jails –**

- receive individuals pending arraignment and hold them awaiting trial, conviction, or sentencing;
- readmit probation, parole, and bail-bond violators and absconders;
- temporarily detain juveniles pending transfer to juvenile authorities;
- hold inmates awaiting transfer to State, Federal, or other local authorities;
- house inmates for Federal, State, or other authorities that have crowding in their facilities;
- hold individuals for the military, for protective custody, for contempt, and for the courts as witnesses;
- hold mentally ill persons pending their movement to appropriate mental health facilities.

**Table 1. Detention status of jail inmates, 1996 and 1989**

Detention status	Percent of jail inmates, taking into account—		
	Prior conviction and most recent arrest, 1996	Most recent arrest only	
		1996	1989
<b>Convicted</b>	65.4%	56.1%	57.4%
Sentenced	55.2	45.9	50.1
Awaiting sentence	10.2	10.2	7.3
<b>Unconvicted</b>	34.6	43.9	42.6
Arraigned —			
awaiting trial/on trial	24.0	--	--
Not arraigned	10.6	--	--
Number of jail inmates	485,856	487,596	380,160

Note: Excludes inmates for whom detention status, offense, or prior conviction was unknown.  
--Not available.

**Table 2. Inmates held in jails for other authorities, 1996 and 1989**

Authority	Jail inmates held for other authorities	
	1996	1989
<b>Federal</b>	9,181	7,111
Federal Bureau of Prisons	3,417	3,491
U.S. Marshals Service	2,591	1,321
Immigration and Naturalization Service	1,877	2,299
Other Federal authorities	1,296	--
<b>State</b>	28,822	22,729
<b>Other local authorities*</b>	20,996	13,121
<b>Unknown</b>	2,207	925
Number	61,206	43,886
Percent of all jail inmates	12.2%	11.1%

--Not available.

\*Data for 1989 may include some inmates held for other Federal authorities.

### An increasing percentage of the jail population was female

Although jail inmates were predominantly male, women accounted for an increasing percentage of the inmates (table 3). In 1983, 7.1% were female; in 1989, 9.5%; and in 1996, 10.2%. The number of women also increased at a faster rate than that of men. The number of women rose from 15,900 in 1983 to 51,600 in 1996 — a 9.5% increase per year. The number of men went from 207,700 in 1983 to 455,400 in 1996 — a 6.2% increase per year.

### 6 in 10 jail inmates were racial or ethnic minorities

About 63% of jail inmates in 1996 were black or African American (41%), Hispanic (18%), or Asian, Pacific Islander, American Indian, and Alaska Native (3%). The percentage of minorities in 1996 had not changed substantially from 1989 after increasing between 1983 and 1989. From 1983 to 1989 the percentage of blacks had risen from 38% to 42% and of Hispanics from 14% to 17%.

### Middle-aged inmates comprised a growing part of the jail population

The Nation's jail population became more middle-aged. In 1996, 24% of jail inmates were between ages 35 and 44, compared to 17% in 1989 and 12% in 1983. The percent between ages 18 and 24, however, dropped from 40% in 1983 to 29% in 1996.

An estimated 2.3% of jail inmates were under age 18 in 1996, up from 1.5% in 1989 and 1.3% in 1983. There were 11,770 inmates under 18, according to survey estimates. However, because the number is small and derived from a sample, this estimate is subject to large variability. The Annual Survey of Jails, last conducted on June 30, 1997, provided a somewhat smaller estimate — 9,105 persons under age 18. (See *Prisoners and Jail Inmates at Midyear 1997*, NCJ 167247, January 1998.)

### 1 in 3 jail inmates were not working before their arrest

Thirty-six percent of jail inmates were unemployed before their most recent arrest — 20% seeking work and 16% not looking. About 64% of jail inmates were employed: 49% were working full time, and 15%, part time or occasionally.

Employment status	Percent of jail inmates
Employed	64.3%
Full time	49.3
Part time	10.4
Occasionally	4.6
Not employed	35.8%
Looking for work	19.6
Not looking	16.2

**Table 3. Selected characteristics of jail inmates, by conviction status, 1996, 1989, and 1983**

	Percent of jail inmates				
	Total	1996		1989	1983
		Convicted	Unconvicted		
<b>Sex</b>					
Male	89.8%	89.8%	90.3%	90.5%	92.9%
Female	10.2	10.2	9.7	9.5	7.1
<b>Race/Hispanic origin</b>					
White non-Hispanic	37.3%	39.7%	32.4%	38.6%	46.4%
Black non-Hispanic	40.8	38.9	44.7	41.7	37.5
Hispanic	18.5	18.3	19.1	17.4	14.3
Other <sup>a</sup>	3.5	3.2	3.8	2.3	1.8
<b>Age</b>					
17 or younger	2.3%	1.4%	4.1%	1.5%	1.3%
18-24	28.5	27.9	30.2	32.6	40.4
25-34	37.4	38.9	34.7	42.9	38.6
35-44	23.9	24.4	22.6	16.7	12.4
45-54	6.3	6.0	6.9	4.6	4.9
55 or older	1.5	1.5	1.4	1.7	2.4
<b>Marital status</b>					
Married	15.7%	16.0%	14.4%	19.0%	21.0%
Widowed	1.4	1.3	1.8	1.0	1.4
Divorced	15.6	16.3	14.2	15.1	15.7
Separated	8.7	8.4	9.1	8.2	7.9
Never married	58.6	58.0	60.5	56.7	54.1
<b>Education<sup>b</sup></b>					
8th grade or less	13.1%	12.7%	14.2%	15.6%	17.7%
Some high school	33.4	31.7	36.6	38.2	41.3
High school graduate	40.0	42.5	35.3	33.1	29.2
Some college or more	13.5	13.1	14.0	13.1	11.8
<b>Military service</b>					
Veteran	11.7%	11.9%	11.1%	15.5%	21.2%
Nonveteran	88.3	88.1	88.9	84.5	78.8
<b>U.S. citizenship</b>					
Citizen	91.8%	93.2%	89.1%	--	--
Noncitizen	8.2	6.8	10.9	--	--
Number of jail inmates	507,026	318,068	169,377	395,554	223,552

Note: Total includes inmates with an unknown conviction or no offense. Data were missing for marital status on 0.1% of the inmates; for education, 0.7%; for military service, 0.1%; and for citizenship, 0.1%.

--Not available.

<sup>a</sup>Includes Asians, Pacific Islanders, American Indians, Alaska Natives, and other racial groups.

<sup>b</sup>See *Methodology* for change in measurement.

A lower percentage of jail inmates than the general population was employed: 64% of jail inmates, compared to 74% of those 18 to 64 in the general population during 1995.<sup>1</sup>

Jail inmates reported low incomes. Almost half reported incomes of less than \$600 a month — at most \$7,200 annually — in the month before their

most recent arrest. A third of jail inmates in 1996 reported incomes of \$1,000 or more — at least \$12,000 a year.

Pre-arrest personal income	Percent of jail inmates
Less than \$300	25.1%
\$300-\$599	20.5
\$600-\$999	18.7
\$1,000-\$1,999	22.2
\$2,000 or more	13.5

Note: Data were missing for 10.9% of inmates.

### 1 in 5 jail inmates received government payments

About 22% of the inmates reported one or more kinds of financial support from government agencies. About 14% said they received money from welfare, including Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), food stamps, and Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC); 7% from Social Security or Supplemental Security Income; and 3% from unemployment insurance, workers' compensation, or veterans' compensation.

Three-quarters of jail inmates reported work income. An estimated 15% reported receiving illegal income.

Sources of personal income	Percent of jail inmates
Wages	74.7%
Family/friends	16.2
Illegal sources	15.2
Welfare	13.8
Supplemental Security Income or Social Security	6.6
Compensation payments	3.0
Other*	5.6

Note: An inmate may have had more than one source of income. \*Includes pension, alimony, educational assistance, investment income and other income sources.

### Unchanged from 1989, 22% were in jail for a drug offense

The rapid increase in the percentage of jail inmates held for a drug offense during the 1980's abated in the 1990's. The percentage charged with a drug offense rose from 9% in 1983 to 23% in 1989 but remained at 22% in 1996 (table 4).

The percentage of inmates in jail for a violent offense rose slightly, from 23% in 1989 to 26% in 1996. The number of violent offenders increased from 85,530 in 1989 to 130,580 in 1996 — a 53% increase.

The larger percentage of violent offenders resulted from an increase in persons accused or convicted of assault — from 7% of inmates in 1989

<sup>1</sup>U.S. Department of Labor, *Employment and Earnings, January 1996*, table 3, p. 160.

**Table 4. Most serious offense of jail inmates, 1996, 1989, and 1983**

Most serious offense	Percent of jail inmates			1989	1983
	1996		Unconvicted		
	Total	Convicted	Unconvicted		
<b>Violent offenses</b>	26.3%	21.8%	36.6%	22.5%	30.7%
Murder <sup>a</sup>	2.8	1.2	6.0	2.8	4.1
Negligent manslaughter	0.4	0.3	0.5	0.5	0.6
Kidnaping	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.8	1.3
Rape	0.5	0.3	0.8	0.8	1.5
Other sexual assault	2.7	2.7	2.9	2.6	2.0
Robbery	6.5	5.6	8.8	6.7	11.2
Assault	11.6	10.0	15.4	7.2	8.6
Other violent <sup>b</sup>	1.3	1.2	1.5	1.1	1.3
<b>Property offenses</b>	26.9%	28.6%	25.5%	30.0%	38.6%
Burglary	7.6	8.0	7.7	10.7	14.3
Larceny/theft	8.0	9.5	5.7	7.9	11.7
Motor vehicle theft	2.6	2.3	3.3	2.8	2.3
Arson	0.4	0.3	0.6	0.7	0.8
Fraud	4.6	4.8	4.3	4.0	5.0
Stolen property	2.1	2.4	1.9	2.4	2.5
Other property <sup>c</sup>	1.6	1.4	2.2	1.6	1.9
<b>Drug offenses</b>	22.0%	23.7%	20.2%	23.0%	9.3%
Possession	11.5	12.6	10.0	9.7	4.7
Trafficking	9.2	9.5	9.2	12.0	4.0
Other drug	1.3	1.5	1.0	1.3	0.6
<b>Public-order offenses</b>	24.3%	25.5%	17.4%	22.8%	20.6%
Weapons	2.3	2.4	2.2	1.9	2.3
Obstruction of justice	4.8	3.3	4.0	2.8	2.0
Traffic violations	3.2	3.8	1.7	2.7	2.2
Driving while intoxicated <sup>d</sup>	7.4	9.5	3.6	8.8	7.0
Drunkenness/morals <sup>e</sup>	2.0	1.9	2.4	1.7	3.4
Violation of parole/probation <sup>f</sup>	2.6	2.7	1.7	3.0	2.3
Other public order <sup>g</sup>	2.0	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.6
<b>Other offenses<sup>h</sup></b>	.5%	.4%	.3%	1.6%	.8%
Number of jail inmates	496,609	315,442	166,295	380,160	219,573

Note: Excludes inmates for whom offense was unknown.

<sup>a</sup>Includes nonnegligent manslaughter.

<sup>b</sup>Includes blackmail, extortion, hit-and-run driving with bodily injury, child abuse, and criminal endangerment.

<sup>c</sup>Includes destruction of property, vandalism, hit-and-run driving without bodily injury, trespassing, and possession of burglary tools.

<sup>d</sup>Includes driving while intoxicated and driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

<sup>e</sup>Includes drunkenness, vagrancy, disorderly conduct, unlawful assembly, morals, and commercialized vice.

<sup>f</sup>Includes parole or probation violations, escape, AWOL, and flight to avoid prosecution.

<sup>g</sup>Includes rioting, abandonment, nonsupport, immigration violations, invasion of privacy, liquor law violations, tax evasion, and bribery. <sup>h</sup>Includes juvenile offenses and other unspecified offenses.

to 12% in 1996. In both years an estimated 3% were being held for homicide and 3% for a sexual offense.

Just under a quarter of jail inmates were charged with a public-order offense in 1996 and 1989. In both years 7% to 9% of inmates were being held for driving while intoxicated (DWI) with alcohol or drugs or for driving under the influence (DUI). Two percent were held for a weapons violation in 1989 and 1996.

**Unconvicted inmates were more likely than convicted inmates to be in jail for serious offenses**

A substantially higher percentage of unconvicted (37%) than convicted (22%) inmates were being held for violent offenses. Among those awaiting trial or arraignment, 6% had been charged with homicide, 15% with assault, and 9% with robbery. Among convicted inmates, 1% had been convicted of homicide, 10% assault, and 6% robbery.

Offsetting these differences were smaller percentages of public-order (17%) and property offenses (26%) among unconvicted inmates than among convicted inmates (26% and 29%, respectively).

These differences can be attributed to the lower rates of pretrial release among those offenders with the most serious offenses as well as their greater chances of going to prison upon conviction. A quarter of sentenced inmates were to serve some portion of their sentence in prison.

**Offenses vary among men and women; blacks, whites, and Hispanics; and by age group**

Male inmates were nearly twice as likely as female inmates to be in jail for a violent offense (table 5). About 12% of the men, compared to 8% of the women, were in jail for assault; 7% of the men and 3% of the women were there for robbery. Overall, 28% of the

men were in jail for a violent offense, compared to 15% of the women.

Women were more likely than men to be in jail for a drug offense. Among female inmates 27% were held for drug law violations; among male inmates 21%. Women (24%) were also more than twice as likely as men (11%) to be in jail for fraud or theft.

Proportionately more black and Hispanic inmates than whites were in jail for drug offenses. More than 1 in 4 blacks and Hispanics compared to 1 in 7 whites were in jail for a drug law violation. Regardless of race or Hispanic origin, about half of the drug offenders were in jail for drug possession.

Black inmates (29%) were somewhat more likely than white (24%) or

Hispanic (25%) inmates to be in jail for a violent offense. Much of this difference is the result of a higher percentage of robbers (10%) among black inmates than among whites (3%) or Hispanics (6%).

Among white inmates the most common offense was DWI or DUI. An estimated 13% of white inmates, compared to 7% of Hispanics and 2% of blacks, were in jail for DWI/DUI.

The distribution of offense types except drug offenses also varied by age. Violent offenses were the most frequent among younger inmates. Almost a third of those 24 or younger, but a fourth of those 25 or older, were in jail for a violent offense. About 10% of inmates 24 or younger, 6% of those between ages 25 and 34, and 4%

**Table 5. Most serious offense of jail inmates, by sex, race/Hispanic origin, and age, 1996**

Most serious offense	Percent of jail inmates							
	Male	Female	White <sup>a</sup>	Black <sup>a</sup>	Hispanic	Age 24 or less	25-34	35 or older
<b>Violent offenses</b>	27.6%	14.9%	23.9%	29.1%	24.8%	31.3%	24.3%	23.7%
Homicide <sup>b</sup>	3.4	1.4	2.8	4.0	2.8	5.3	1.9	2.6
Sexual assault <sup>c</sup>	3.5	.1	4.7	2.2	2.3	2.4	2.9	4.3
Robbery	6.9	3.4	3.3	9.8	5.7	10.2	5.7	3.9
Assault	11.9	8.2	11.1	11.9	11.7	11.2	12.1	11.4
Other violent	1.8	1.8	2.0	1.2	2.2	2.2	1.7	1.5
<b>Property offenses</b>	26.3%	31.7%	30.0%	26.1%	22.3%	29.9%	27.1%	23.7%
Burglary	8.1	3.7	9.1	6.5	7.5	9.7	8.1	5.1
Larceny/theft	7.4	13.1	8.8	8.7	5.3	7.0	8.4	8.4
Motor vehicle theft	2.7	1.4	2.1	2.5	3.3	4.1	2.1	1.7
Fraud	3.8	11.1	5.7	4.5	2.1	3.9	4.6	5.2
Stolen property	2.3	.9	2.0	2.2	2.2	2.9	2.1	1.4
Other property	2.0	1.6	2.4	1.7	2.0	2.5	1.7	1.8
<b>Drug offenses</b>	21.4%	27.4%	14.1%	27.6%	27.7%	19.8%	23.6%	22.3%
Possession	11.3	13.3	7.3	14.9	13.4	10.2	12.5	11.5
Trafficking	8.9	11.4	5.6	10.9	13.4	8.6	9.6	9.2
Other/unspecified drug	1.2	2.7	1.2	1.8	.9	.9	1.5	1.6
<b>Public-order offenses</b>	24.3%	24.7%	31.4%	16.9%	24.8%	18.0%	24.6%	30.2%
Weapons	2.5	.7	1.3	3.1	2.4	3.7	1.4	2.0
Obstruction of justice	4.7	6.0	5.9	4.6	3.1	4.9	5.0	4.6
Traffic violations	3.3	1.9	4.2	1.8	3.7	2.1	3.9	3.3
Driving while intoxicated	7.6	5.2	13.2	1.9	7.2	2.4	7.6	12.0
Drunkenness/morals	1.7	5.4	1.9	2.0	2.2	1.1	2.2	2.7
Violation of parole/probation	2.5	3.0	2.8	1.9	3.3	2.6	2.4	2.8
Other public-order	2.0	2.6	2.0	1.6	2.9	1.2	2.2	2.7
<b>Other offenses</b>	.4%	1.2%	.7%	.4%	.4%	1.0%	.4%	.1%
Number of jail inmates	445,952	50,657	185,122	202,825	91,664	154,129	185,131	157,350

<sup>a</sup>Non-Hispanic inmates only.

<sup>b</sup>Includes murder and nonnegligent manslaughter.

<sup>c</sup>Includes rape and other sexual assault.

of those 35 or older were charged with robbery.

Drug offenses showed little variation by age. About 12% of those 25 or older and 10% of those younger than 25 were jailed for drug possession.

DWI was the single most frequent offense among those inmates age 35 or older (12%) but was infrequent among those age 24 or younger (2%).

**54% of jail inmates already had a criminal justice status when arrested**

At the time of their most recent arrest, almost 1 in 3 jail inmates were on probation; 1 in 8 on parole; and 1 in 8 on bail or prerelease bond (table 6). Approximately 1% of inmates, or 5,300 persons, were arrested while being electronically monitored.

**Three-quarters of jail inmates had served prior sentences**

The percentage of recidivists – those with a prior sentence to probation or incarceration as an adult or juvenile – declined from 77% in 1989 to 73% in 1996 (table 7). Approximately 59% of jail inmates in 1996 and 57% in 1989 had previously been sentenced to jail, prison, juvenile detention, or other type of correctional facility. In both years

63% had served a prior sentence to probation. Half of the inmates had served prior sentences to both probation and incarceration.

Prior sentences	Percent of jail inmates
None	27.3%
Probation only	14.3
Incarceration only	9.7
Both probation/ incarceration	48.7

Criminal records of jail inmates in 1996 were longer than those of inmates in 1989. About 32% of all inmates in 1996, compared to 23% in 1989, said they had served three or more terms in jail, prison, or other correctional facility.

Fourteen percent in both surveys said they had served three or more sentences to probation.

**44% of inmates had current or past violent offenses; 14% had only drug offenses**

Up from 36% in 1989, 44% of inmates in 1996 were in jail for a violent offense or with a prior sentence to incarceration or probation for a violent offense (table 8). Nearly a third of inmates in 1996 had a current charge or conviction for a violent offense (including 10% who were first-time offenders, 9% who were recidivists but first-time

violent offenders, and 12% who had both current and prior violent offenses). An additional 13% of all jail inmates in 1996 were neither currently charged nor sentenced for a violent offense but had served a prior sentence for a violent offense.

**Table 7. Prior sentences to probation or incarceration, for jail inmates, 1996 and 1989**

Prior sentence	Percent of jail inmates	
	1996	1989
<b>Probation</b>		
0	37.0%	37.1%
1	34.6	33.9
2	13.9	14.9
3-5	12.2	11.4
6-10	1.7	2.2
11 or more	0.6	0.5
<b>Incarceration</b>		
0	41.5%	43.4%
1	17.5	21.7
2	9.0	11.7
3-5	17.8	13.6
6-10	9.0	6.0
11 or more	5.1	3.7
<b>Incarceration or probation</b>		
0	27.3%	23.5%
1	17.4	20.6
2	11.3	16.5
3-5	20.2	22.5
6-10	15.1	10.7
11 or more	8.7	6.2
Number of jail inmates	502,140	378,353

Note: Excludes inmates for whom data on prior sentences to probation or incarceration were unknown.

**Table 6. Criminal justice status of jail inmates at arrest, 1996**

Criminal justice status at arrest	Percent of jail inmates
<b>None</b>	46.4%
<b>Any status</b>	53.6
On probation	31.7
On parole	13.1
On bail/bond	12.7
On pretrial release	4.4
In alcohol or drug diversion program/counseling	2.8
On work/study release, electronic monitoring, house arrest, or day or weekend reporting	2.4
On escape	.9
Other release*	1.1

Note: Percentages add to more than total because inmates may have had more than one status.

\*Includes inmates on furlough.

**Table 8. Criminal history of jail inmates, by conviction status, 1996 and 1989**

Criminal history	Percent of jail inmates			1989
	1996		Unconvicted	
	Total	Convicted		
<b>No previous sentence</b>	29.2%	22.4%	41.6%	22.4%
Current violent offense	10.1	6.5	17.6	6.6
Current drug offense	6.7	5.8	8.7	6.7
Current other offense	12.4	10	15.4	9.1
<b>Violent recidivists</b>	33.9%	35.3%	32.5%	29.9%
Current and prior violent	11.8	13.3	9.8	7.5
Current violent only	8.9	7.8	11.7	10.5
Prior violent only	13.2	14.2	10.9	11.9
<b>Nonviolent recidivists</b>	36.9%	42.3%	25.9%	47.7%
Prior minor public-order only	2.9	3.3	1.9	3.5
Current and prior drug offense only	7.0	8.4	4.9	4.3
Other prior offenses	27.0	30.7	19	39.9
Number of jail inmates	481,968	307,158	160,585	375,582

Note: Excludes inmates for whom current offense or prior probation or incarceration was unknown. Detail may not add to total because of rounding.

About 7% of all jail inmates in 1996 were first offenders charged with a drug offense, and another 7% were recidivists with current and prior charges for drug offenses only. In 1989 these drug offenders had accounted for 11% of all inmates.

About 12% of inmates in 1996 were first-time offenders charged with a property or public-order offense. Another 3% had previously been sentenced only for such minor public-order offenses as drunkenness, vagrancy, loitering, disorderly conduct, minor traffic violations, commercialized vice, and minor juvenile offenses. The remaining 27% were recidivists with prior sentences to property crimes or the more serious public-order offenses.

### Criminal histories differ among inmate groups

Overall, female inmates (42%) were more likely than male inmates (28%) to have been first-time offenders (table 9). While nearly equal percentages of male and female inmates were first-time violent offenders (about 10%), substantially larger percentages of female inmates than males were first-time drug offenders (13% compared to 6%) or first-time offenders charged with property or public-order offenses (19% compared to 12%).

Histories of violence were far more common among men (36%) than women (17%) in jail. In 1996 about 1 in every 4 male inmates, compared to 1 in every 8 female inmates, said they had a prior sentence to probation or incarceration for a violent offense. In addition, 9% of male inmates and 5% of female inmates were first-time violent offenders who had been previously sentenced for nonviolent crimes.

Histories of violence were also more common among blacks (37%) than whites (32%) and Hispanics (29%) in jail. While black inmates had a higher percentage of violent recidivists than did white inmates, they also had a higher percentage of first-time offenders (30% compared to 26%). Hispanic inmates had the highest percentage of first-time offenders (35%). These differences result from the high percentage of first-time drug offenders and other nonviolent offenders among Hispanics (25%), as compared to blacks (19%) and whites (17%).

### Among sentenced jail inmates — half would serve less than 6 months from admission

About 55% of the jail inmates were sentenced to serve time in a correctional facility — 43% in a jail and 12% in prison. Among those sentenced to

jail, the median sentence (or value for which half had a shorter sentence and half, a longer one) was just under 9 months (table 10).

Among those awaiting transfer to prison, the median sentence was 60 months. The mean sentences (or averages) were substantially longer, nearly 23 months and 100 months, respectively, because of some relatively long sentences received by a small percentage of inmates.

When the time already served and the time to be served until the expected date of release were taken into account, half of those sentenced to jail expected to serve 6 months or less. Half of those sentenced to prison expected to serve 30 months or less in jail and prison combined. These estimates include the time served on the previous incarceration for those

**Table 9. Criminal history of jail inmates, by sex, race, and Hispanic origin, 1996**

Criminal history	Percent of jail inmates				
	Male	Female	White*	Black*	Hispanic
<b>No previous sentence</b>	27.8%	41.5%	25.6%	30.3%	35.1%
Current violent offense	10.2	9.1	8.7	11.6	10.1
Current drug offense	5.9	13.1	3.5	7.7	11.5
Current nonviolent offense	11.6	19.3	13.3	11.0	13.6
<b>Violent recidivists</b>	35.9%	16.9%	32.4%	36.7%	28.7%
Current and prior violent	12.7	3.9	10.8	12.6	11.8
Current violent only	9.4	4.8	8.2	10.3	6.7
Prior violent only	13.7	8.1	13.3	13.9	10.2
<b>Nonviolent recidivists</b>	36.3%	41.6%	42.1%	32.9%	36.2%
Prior minor public-order only	2.6	5.7	3.7	2.4	2.4
Current and prior drug offense only	6.9	7.9	4.0	8.9	9.1
Other prior offenses	26.9	28.0	34.3	21.6	24.6
Number of jail inmates	433,263	48,705	180,484	196,501	88,526

Note: Excludes inmates for whom arrest offense or prior probation or incarceration was unknown.  
\*Excludes inmates of Hispanic origin.

**Table 10. Sentence length and time served for jail inmates, 1996**

	Sentenced to jail	Awaiting transfer to prison
<b>Maximum sentence length<sup>a</sup></b>		
Median	8.7 mo	60.0 mo
Mean	22.9	100.4
<b>Time served since admission<sup>b</sup></b>		
Median	3.0 mo	9.0 mo
Mean	6.7	18.1
<b>Time to be served to expected date of release<sup>c</sup></b>		
Median	5.7 mo	29.5 mo
Mean	10.5	52.8
Number of inmates	178,939	50,761

Note: Because data on sentence length and time served are restricted to persons in jail, they overstate the average sentence and time to be served by those entering jail or sentenced to State prison. Persons with shorter sentences leave jail more quickly, resulting in a longer average sentence among persons in the inmate sample.

<sup>a</sup>Based on the total maximum sentence for all consecutive sentences.

<sup>b</sup>Includes all previous incarceration time for the current sentence.

<sup>c</sup>Based on time served when interviewed plus time to be served until the expected date of release.

**Table 11. Length of sentence and expected time to be served, by offense of sentenced jail inmates, 1996**

Most serious offense	Number of jail inmates	Maximum sentence length <sup>a</sup>		Total time to be served until release <sup>b</sup>	
		Median	Mean	Median	Mean
All offenses	159,044	8.7 mo	22.9 mo	5.7 mo	10.4 mo
<b>Violent offenses</b>	30,655	12.0 mo	36.0 mo	8.2 mo	15.9 mo
Sexual assault	3,896	12.0	29.0	11.6	17.9
Robbery	5,616	30.0	60.2	11.9	25.0
Assault	17,696	9.5	29.2	6.2	12.0
<b>Property offenses</b>	41,371	11.0 mo	25.6 mo	6.4 mo	10.8 mo
Burglary	9,181	12.0	39.4	7.6	14.8
Larceny/theft	15,731	8.0	22.5	5.5	8.6
<b>Drug offenses</b>	30,290	12.0 mo	23.9 mo	6.6 mo	12.9 mo
Possession	17,041	12.0	22.2	6.2	12.2
Trafficking	10,820	12.0	29.4	9.0	15.8
<b>Public-order offenses</b>	56,311	5.2 mo	13.4 mo	3.5 mo	5.9 mo
Driving while intoxicated	22,309	6.0	20.1	4.1	6.4
Other public-order	34,002	4.0	9.0	3.0	5.6

Note: Because data on sentence length and time served are restricted to persons in jail, they overstate the average sentence and time to be served by those entering jail or sentenced to State prison.

Persons with shorter sentences leave jail more quickly, resulting in a longer average sentence among persons in the inmate sample.

<sup>a</sup>Based on the total maximum sentence for all consecutive sentences.

<sup>b</sup>Based on time served when interviewed plus time to be served until the expected date of release.

inmates who were released and then readmitted on the same sentence.

Among inmates sentenced to serve their time in jail, violent offenders expected to serve the longest (half were to serve 8 months or less on a median sentence of 12 months) and public-order offenders the shortest (4 months or less on a median sentence of 5 months) (table 11). Among those serving time for drug offenses, half anticipated serving 7 months or less on a median sentence of 12 months. Half of those sentenced for property

offenses expected to serve 6 months or less (on a median sentence of 11 months).

Overall, based on the mean sentence (22.9 months) and the mean time expected to be served until release (10.4 months), offenders sentenced to jail were to serve on average 45% of their total maximum sentence.

**Reported drug use rose between 1989 and 1996**

A higher percentage of inmates in 1996 than in 1989 reported use of every type of drug except cocaine

(table 12). The percentage of inmates ever using marijuana rose from 71% to 78%; stimulants (amphetamine and methamphetamine) from 22% to 34%; hallucinogens, including LSD and PCP, from 24% to 32%; depressants, including Quaalude, barbiturates, and tranquilizers without a doctor's prescription, from 21% to 30%; and heroin or other opiates from 19% to 24%. Half of inmates in both years reported trying cocaine. Overall, 82% of all jail inmates in 1996 said they had ever used an illegal drug, up from 78% in 1989.

Only convicted offenders were asked if they had used drugs in the month before or at the time of the offense that had brought them to jail. During the month before their offense over half of convicted jail inmates reported they had used illegal drugs, up from 44% in 1989. Use of marijuana in the month before the offense increased from 28% to 37% and of stimulants from 5% to 10%. Reported cocaine or crack use was stable at about 24%.

Thirty-six percent of convicted jail inmates said they were using drugs at the time of their offense in 1996, compared to 27% in 1989. Almost 2 in 10 were using marijuana in 1996, and 1 in 10 in 1989. Approximately 6% in 1996 and 2% in 1989 were using amphetamine or other stimulants. In both 1996 and 1989 about 15% were on cocaine or crack at the time of the offense.

**Table 12. Prior drug use of jail inmates, by type of drug, 1996 and 1989**

Type of drug	Ever used drugs		Ever used drugs regularly <sup>a</sup>		Used drugs in the month before the offense		Used drugs at the time of the offense	
	1996	1989	1996	1989	1996	1989	1996	1989
Any drug <sup>b</sup>	82.4%	77.7%	64.2%	58.0%	55.0%	43.8%	35.6%	27.0%
Marijuana or hashish	78.2	70.7	54.9	47.8	36.8	28.0	18.5	9.0
Cocaine or crack	50.4	50.4	31.0	30.7	24.1	23.5	15.2	13.7
Heroin or opiates	23.9	18.6	11.8	11.8	8.8	7.2	5.6	4.9
Depressants <sup>c</sup>	29.9	21.1	10.4	9.0	5.9	3.9	2.4	1.2
Stimulants <sup>d</sup>	33.6	22.1	16.5	12.1	10.4	5.4	6.1	2.2
Hallucinogens <sup>e</sup>	32.2	23.7	10.5	9.4	4.6	3.2	1.6	1.6
Inhalants	16.8	--	4.8	--	1.0	--	0.3	--

Note: Detail add to more than total because inmates may have used more than one drug.

--Not reported.

<sup>a</sup>Used drugs at least once a week for at least a month.

<sup>b</sup>Other unspecified drugs are included in the totals.

<sup>c</sup>Includes barbiturates, tranquilizers, and Quaalude.

<sup>d</sup>Includes amphetamine and methamphetamine.

<sup>e</sup>Includes LSD and PCP.

Overall, 16% of convicted jail inmates said they had committed their offense to get money for drugs. Of convicted property and drug offenders, about 1 in 4 had committed their crimes to get money for drugs. A higher percentage of drug offenders in 1996 (24%) than in 1989 (14%) were in jail for a crime committed to raise money for drugs.

Offense	Percent of jail inmates who committed offense to get money for drugs	
	1996	1989
Total	15.8%	13.3%
Violent	8.8	11.5
Property	25.6	24.4
Drugs	23.5	14.0
Public-order	4.2	3.3

**62% of convicted jail inmates reported they consumed alcohol regularly**

Drinking wine, beer, or liquor was a part of the lives of most inmates, and consuming alcoholic beverages sometimes occurred just before or during the time inmates had committed crimes. Men were more likely than women to have routinely had alcoholic drinks, to have drunk before their offense, and to have consumed excessive amounts of alcohol.

An estimated 63% of convicted male inmates reported having drunk regularly — at least once a week for a month or more — compared to 50% of convicted females.

Among convicted inmates 42% of the males and 30% of the females said they had been drinking alcoholic beverages when they committed their offense. Almost 3 in 10 convicted men and 2 in 10 convicted women reported drinking quantities that, combined with their weight and metabolism, amounted to blood alcohol concentrations of 0.10 grams per milliliter or higher, the definition of alcoholic impairment in many States. (See *Methodology*.)

Alcohol use	Percent of convicted jail inmates		
	Total	Male	Female
<b>Regularly*</b>	61.6%	62.9%	50.0%
<b>Time of offense</b>	40.5%	41.7%	30.4%
Blood alcohol concentration			
Less than 0.08	11.6%	11.9%	9.0%
0.08 to 0.09	1.8	1.8	1.3
0.10 to 0.19	7.2	7.5	4.8
0.20 to 0.39	9.0	9.3	6.2
0.40 or higher	10.9	11.1	9.3
Drinking 5 or more hours	17.1%	17.7%	11.9%

\*Includes inmates who reported drinking at least once a week for at least a month.

**6 in 10 convicted jail inmates were using alcohol or drugs at the time of the offense**

Approximately 41% of convicted inmates had been drinking alcohol, and 36% were using drugs at the time they committed their offense (table 13). The likelihood of using drugs or alcohol varied according to the offense. Generally, except for robbers, violent and public-order offenders had used alcohol more often than drugs at the time of the crime. Drug offenders reported a heavier use of illegal drugs than alcohol. Use by property offenders was fairly evenly divided between the two substances.

An estimated 42% of violent offenders said they were using alcohol at the time of the offense, and 28%, drugs. Of those convicted of homicide or of assault, 47% reported alcohol use, and about 20%, drug use. Thirty-two percent of those convicted of sexual assault were using alcohol, and 22% were using drugs.

About 30% of drug offenders reported drinking alcohol, and 59% reported using drugs at the time of the conviction offense. Jail inmates sentenced for fraud also reported a lesser use of alcohol (22%) than drugs (45%).

Offenders most likely to have reported using alcohol were those convicted of DWI (94%), homicide (47%), and assault (47%). Most likely to be using drugs were those convicted of drug trafficking (60%), drug possession (57%), fraud (45%), and robbery (44%).

**Nearly two-thirds of jail inmates said they had driven after consuming alcohol or drugs**

Jail inmates reported life experiences they had had after using alcohol and drugs. Their responses suggest that about half the inmates through use of alcohol or drugs had threatened their own or others' lives, had damaged relationships with other people, or had marred their personal and work histories. Nearly two-thirds admitted to

**Table 13. Convicted jail inmates who committed the current offense while using drugs or alcohol, by most serious offense, 1996**

Most serious offense	Number convicted	Using at the time of the offense—			
		Total	Drugs only	Alcohol only	Both
<b>All offenses*</b>	311,016	60.2%	19.6%	24.5%	16.1%
<b>Violent offenses*</b>	67,711	55.2%	13.5%	27.4%	14.3%
Homicide	4,574	50.3	3.4	31.0	15.9
Sexual assault	9,602	44.8	13.3	23.1	8.4
Robbery	17,146	63.2	24.9	18.8	19.5
Assault	31,179	54.2	7.1	33.3	13.8
<b>Property offenses*</b>	88,297	55.2%	21.0%	17.9%	16.3%
Burglary	24,789	55.9	16.6	20.7	18.6
Larceny/theft	28,938	56.5	22.9	18.5	15.1
Fraud	14,980	52.4	30.2	7.2	15.0
<b>Drug offenses*</b>	73,735	65.2%	35.7%	6.0%	23.5%
Possession	39,360	64.3	35.0	7.1	22.2
Trafficking	29,607	64.7	35.5	4.5	24.7
<b>Public-order offenses</b>	80,069	65.4%	8.6%	46.2%	10.6%
Driving while intoxicated	29,870	95.1	1.5	83.2	10.4
Other public-order	50,200	47.7	12.8	24.2	10.7

\*Includes offenses for which estimates are not shown separately.

**Table 14. Substance abuse treatment of jail inmates, by past drug or alcohol use, 1996**

Type of treatment	Total	Percent of all jail inmates who regularly* used –		Percent of convicted jail inmates who used in the month before conviction –	
		Alcohol	Drugs	Alcohol	Drugs
<b>Any treatment</b>	42.3%	55.6%	55.7%	54.7%	58.3%
<b>Ever participated while under correctional supervision</b>	28.8%	38.8%	38.7%	40.0%	43.7%
In prison/jail	20.7%	27.9%	28.4%	28.4%	31.7%
On probation/parole	19.2	26.2	26.2	27.3	30.3
<b>Treatment since admission</b>	10.3%	13.6%	14.0%	15.3%	16.9%
Self-help group/peer counseling	7.7	10.2	10.4	11.8	12.5
Education program	3.2	3.9	4.5	4.6	5.5
Residential facility or unit	1.6	2.2	2.3	2.2	3.0
Counseling by a professional	1.1	1.6	1.7	1.6	2.2
Detoxification unit	0.7	0.9	1.0	0.9	1.0
Number of inmates	502,105	297,149	321,933	206,270	172,553

Note: Detail adds to more than total because inmates may have participated in more than one type of program.

\*Used once a week for at least a month.

having driven a motor vehicle after drinking or drug use, including 19% who had been in an accident. Almost half had been in a physical fight after drinking or drug use. Half had been arrested or held for the police after consuming either alcohol or drugs. Over a fifth had lost a job because of drinking or drug problems.

	Drinking or using drugs
<b>Percent of jail inmates who ever –</b>	
Used motor vehicle after –	63.0%
Had motor vehicle accident after –	18.6
Had arguments with family or friends after –	57.0
Been in physical fight while or after –	45.9
Been arrested or held by police because of –	47.7
Lost job because of –	23.0

**After entering jail, 1 in 6 of the active drug users had participated in treatment or self-help program**

About 17% of convicted jail inmates who used drugs in the month before their arrest had participated in a self-help group (for example, Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous), an education or awareness class, detoxification unit, counseling, or a residential treatment program (table 14). The most common activity was

joining a self-help group (13%), and second most common was an education program (6%). Fewer than 5% had been placed in a residential treatment facility or had received professional counseling.

Of convicted inmates who consumed alcohol in the month before their current offense, 15% had participated in substance abuse treatment since admission to jail; 12% had joined a self-help group; and 5%, an education program.

While 42% of all jail inmates had ever participated in some form of alcohol or drug treatment, 56% of inmates who drank regularly had been in a treatment program. About 29% of all jail inmates and 39% of the more active drug users or drinkers had participated in treatment while under correctional supervision. Thirteen percent of all inmates and 17% of the regular drinkers or more active drug users had received their only treatment outside a correctional setting.

**6 in 10 jail inmates grew up living in homes without both parents**

Almost half the inmates said they had lived in a one-parent home (43% with their mother and 5% with their father) (table 15). Relative to the general

**Table 15. Family background of jail inmates, 1996**

While growing up –	Percent of jail inmates
<b>Person(s) lived with most of time</b>	
Both parents	39.7%
Mother only	43.3
Father only	4.9
Grandparents	7.0
Other	5.2
<b>Ever lived in a foster home, agency, or institution</b>	13.6%
<b>Family ever received public assistance</b>	
Welfare only	22.0%
Public housing only	4.8
Both	11.8
<b>Family member ever incarcerated</b>	
Total*	46.1%
Father	17.1
Mother	4.4
Brother	30.3
Sister	6.2
Spouse	3.3
Child	1.3
<b>Parent or guardian ever abused alcohol or drugs while inmate was growing up</b>	
Alcohol only	23.1%
Drugs only	1.3
Both	6.9

\*Detail may not add to total because more than one response was possible.

population, jail inmates were over twice as likely to have grown up in a single-parent household. In 1980, when most inmates in jail in 1996 were between ages 10 and 18, 20% of the 63.4 million children in the Nation's households were living with 1 parent, compared to 48% of jail inmates. About 77% of children in the general population and 40% of jail inmates were living with both parents.<sup>2</sup>

About 12% of jail inmates had lived in childhood households without either parent. They had grown up in the care of grandparents, other relatives, or friends. Fourteen percent had lived in a foster home or agency at some time in their lives. Nearly 40% of all jail inmates reported that their parents or guardians received public assistance while they were growing up. A third

<sup>2</sup>U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1997*, table 81, p. 66.

**Table 16. Physical or sexual abuse before current admission, by sex of jail inmates, 1996**

Abused before admission	Percent of jail inmates		
	Total	Male	Female
<b>Ever</b>	16.4%	12.9%	47.5%
Before age 18	14.3	11.9	36.6
After age 18	4.7	2.3	26.7
Physically abused	13.3	10.7	37.2
Sexually abused	8.7	5.6	37.1
Raped	6.6	3.7	32.2
Completed	5.4	3.0	26.6
Attempted	1.2	0.7	5.6

Note: Detail adds to more than total because some inmates were abused both before and since age 18 or were both physically and sexually abused.

reported that their household received welfare or public assistance. Seventeen percent reported living as children in public housing or publicly assisted housing.

Nearly half of the inmates reported that a family member had ever been incarcerated. Generally it was the male family members who had been incarcerated; 30% of inmates said their brothers had been incarcerated; 17%, fathers; 6%, sisters; and 4%, mothers.

Almost a third of inmates said their parent or guardian had abused alcohol or drugs. Abuse of alcohol predominated; 30% said parents or guardians had abused alcohol and 8% reported parental abuse of drugs.

**Nearly half of all female inmates reported past physical or sexual abuse**

Larger percentages of women than men reported that they had ever been physically or sexually abused (table 16). Before their most recent admission to jail, 37% of female inmates, compared to 11% of males, said they had been physically abused, while 37% of women, compared to 6% of men, reported they had been sexually abused. About 27% of women and 3% of men had ever been raped.

Men reported that abuse occurred primarily while they were younger than 18. Approximately 12% of men reported being physically or sexually abused before age 18 and 2% at age 18 or older. Women continued to be abused as adults; 37% reported abuse while a juvenile and 27% while an adult.

**Over a third of jail inmates reported a physical or mental disability**

Approximately 37% of inmates reported that they had a physical, mental, or emotional condition, or difficulty seeing, learning, hearing, or speaking (table 17). A higher percentage of jail inmates than the general population reported a disability – 37% compared to 26% of the population.<sup>3</sup>

About 1 in 5 reported a physical, mental, or other health condition that limited the kind or amount of work they could perform. One in ten said they had a mental or emotional condition; 1 in 10 a physical disability; 1 in 10 difficulty seeing print on a page, even with glasses; and 1 in 10 a learning disability, such as dyslexia or attention deficit disorder.

<sup>3</sup>National Center for Educational Statistics, *Behind Prison Walls*, October 1994, table 2.10.

**Table 17. Physical and mental disabilities reported by jail inmates, 1996**

Reported disabilities	Percent of jail inmates
Any disability	36.5%
Physical, mental, or other health condition*	20.7
Mental/emotional condition	10.4
Physical disability	10.2
Difficulty seeing newsprint even when wearing glasses	9.2
Learning disability (such as dyslexia or attention deficit disorder)	9.1
Difficulty hearing a normal conversation even when wearing a hearing aid	6.1
Speech disability (such as a lisp or stuttering)	3.7

\*Any condition that limits the kind or amount of work the inmate can do.

**Almost half of jail inmates had received a medical examination after admission**

Approximately 49% of male inmates and 47% of female inmates had a medical examination to determine the status of their health after they were admitted to jail (table 18).

Men were less likely than women to report health problems after admission.

**Table 18. Health care of jail inmates, by sex, 1996**

Health care services	Percent of jail inmates		
	Total	Male	Female
<b>At admission jail authorities—</b>			
Asked about health or medical history	80.3%	80.1%	81.9%
Asked if ever thought about or attempted suicide	72.6	72.6	72.2
Checked if sick, injured, or intoxicated	52.5	53.1	47.2
<b>After admission, inmate –</b>			
Had medical examination	48.5%	48.6%	47.4%
Had any condition needing medical attention	42.8%	42.0%	50.2%
Medical problem	33.2	32.4	40.3
Accidental injury	7.6	7.8	5.6
Intentional injury	5.1	5.3	3.6
Received medical care for –			
Medical problem*	22.0%	21.3%	28.4%
Accidental injury	5.6	5.7	4.2
Intentional injury	3.0	3.1	1.8

\*Excludes injuries before or after admission to jail.

**Table 19. Mental health treatment of jail inmates, by sex, 1996**

Because of a mental or emotional problem, inmate had —	Percent of jail inmates		
	Total	Male	Female
Received any mental health services			
Ever	25.6%	24.4%	35.6%
After admission	11.3	10.3	20.3
Received professional counseling			
Ever	18.7%	17.8%	26.6%
After admission	4.5	4.1	8.2
Taken a prescribed medication			
Ever	17.5%	16.4%	27.0%
After admission	9.2	8.3	16.5
Been admitted to a mental health program overnight			
Ever	10.2%	9.7%	14.9%
After admission	1.5	1.4	2.1
Received any other mental health services			
Ever	1.6%	1.6%	1.3%
After admission	0.3	0.2	0.4

About 42% of male inmates and 50% of female inmates had developed an illness, injury, or other condition needing professional medical attention. About 32% of men in jail and 40% of the women had a medical problem, like a cold or the flu. Approximately 21% of males and 28% of females had received health care for a medical problem.

Men and women were equally likely to be injured in jail. An estimated 5% of male inmates and 4% of female inmates had been injured in a fight or assault after admission. Approximately 8% of men and 6% of women had been injured accidentally.

**A quarter of inmates had received treatment for a mental or emotional problem**

Men were less likely than women to have ever been treated for a mental or emotional problem other than drug or alcohol abuse. About 24% of male inmates and 36% of female inmates had received mental health services (table 19). Approximately a fifth of men and a quarter of women had received counseling. About 1 in 6 males and 1 in 4 females had taken medication prescribed for mental or emotional problems. An estimated 1 in 10 males and 3 in 20 females had been admitted to a mental health facility and stayed at least overnight.

**Table 20. Activities of jail inmates, 1996**

Activity in jail	Percent of jail inmates
<b>In the 24 hours before the interview</b>	
Watching television	
Watched	73.8%
Did not watch available television	17.7
Television not available to watch	8.5
Reading	
Read	68.0%
Did not read available material	17.4
Reading material not available	14.7
Physical exercise	
Participated	43.5%
Games, arts and crafts, and other recreation	
Participated	55.4%
<b>In the previous week</b>	
Work assignment <sup>a</sup>	
Any	26.4%
General janitorial	9.4
Food preparation	9.4
Maintenance, repair, or construction	3.5
Grounds and road maintenance	2.8
Laundry	2.1
Library, barbershop, office, or other services	2.7
Goods production	0.7
Other	1.1
Visits from family/friends	
Visits in past week	42.1%
None	21.9
None since admission	35.9
Telephone calls with family/friends	
Calls in past week	76.9%
None	19.7
Not allowed	3.4
Religious activities <sup>b</sup>	
Participated	54.9%

<sup>a</sup>Detail adds to more than total because inmates may have more than one work assignment.

<sup>b</sup>Includes religious services, private prayer, and meditation.

had a work assignment at the time of interview.

In the 24 hours before the survey interview, three-quarters of inmates had watched television. An estimated 68% reported that they had read newspapers, magazines, or books; 44% had exercised, doing activities like competitive sports, weight lifting, or running; and 55% had participated in other forms of recreation, as in playing cards or other games or creating arts and crafts.

**Table 21. Time spent in activities and number of calls and visits, by jail inmates, 1996**

Activity	Jail inmates	
	All	Partici-pants
<b>In past 24 hours, average time spent—</b>		
Watching television	190 min	258 min
Reading	142	209
Exercise	44	102
Games, arts and crafts and other recreation	85	155
<b>In the past week</b>		
Work assignment	7.4 hr	28.1 hr
Visits from family/friends	.8 visits	1.8 visits
Calls from family/friends	4.5 calls	5.9 calls
Religious activities	159 min	291 min

After their admission to jail, 10% of male inmates and 20% of females had received mental health services. An estimated 8% of males and 17% of females had taken medication for a mental or emotional problem; 4% of men and 8% of women had been counseled by a professional.

**1 in 4 jail inmates had a work assignment**

The most common assignments in the jail were general janitorial and food preparation duties, with 9% of inmates employed at each type of task (table 20). Approximately 33% of the convicted and 16% of the unconvicted

In the week prior to interview, over 4 in 10 inmates had visits from family or friends, and 3 in 4 had talked with them on the telephone. Over half had attended religious services, prayed privately, or meditated.

On average, in the 24 hours before the survey interview, inmates spent over 3 hours watching television, 2½ hours reading, 1½ hours in games and arts and crafts, and ¾ of an hour exercising (table 21). In the past week they worked an average of 7 hours and spent about 2½ hours in religious activities. They made or received 5 telephone calls and had 1 visit.

### 14% of inmates had been in a fight, hit, or punched since entering jail

About 1 in 5 inmates 24 or younger and 1 in 10 inmates 35 or older had been in a fight after admission (table 22). When asked how safe they felt from being hit, punched, or assaulted by other inmates, 69% of inmates said they were safe or somewhat safe, while 22% said they felt unsafe or somewhat unsafe. An estimated 57% of jail inmates said the jail was safer or as safe as the streets where they had lived.

**Table 22. Involvement in fights and perceived safety of jail, by jail inmates, 1996**

	Percent of jail inmates
<b>Involved in fight, was hit or punched after admission</b>	14.3%
Male	14.8
Female	10.5
24 or younger	21.1
25-34	13.2
35 or older	9.1
<b>Perceived safety from assault by other inmates</b>	
Safe	51.7%
Somewhat safe	17.6
Neither safe nor unsafe	9.0
Somewhat unsafe	8.5
Unsafe	13.1
<b>Perceived safety of jail compared to that of the streets</b>	
Jail safer	20.9%
Streets safer	43.3
About the same	35.8

## Methodology

The 1996 Survey of Inmates in Local Jails was conducted for BJS by the U.S. Bureau of the Census. Similar surveys of jail inmates were conducted in 1972, 1978, 1983, and 1989. From October 1995 through March 1996 Census interviewers collected data on individual characteristics of jail inmates, current offenses, sentences and time served, criminal histories, jail activities, conditions and programs, prior drug and alcohol use and treatment, and health care services provided while in jail.

The interviews, about an hour long, used computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI). With CAPI, computers provide the interviewer questions, including followup questions tailored to preceding answers. Before the interview inmates were told verbally and in writing that participation was voluntary and that all information provided would be held in confidence. Participants were assured that the survey was solely for statistical purposes and that no individual could be identified through use of survey results.

### Sample design

The sample for the 1996 survey was selected from a universe of 3,328 jails that were enumerated in the 1993 Census of Jails or opened after the Census but before the spring of 1996. The sample design was a stratified two-stage selection. In the first stage six separate strata were formed based on the size of the male and female populations. In two strata all jails were selected – those jails housing only females and those with more than 1,000 males or more than 50 females or both. In the remaining four strata a systematic sample of jails was selected. Each jail within a stratum had an equal probability of selection. Equal probabilities were used instead of probability proportional to size because jail populations were likely to change between 1993 and 1995. Overall, 462 jails were selected. Interviews were conducted in 431 jails; 19

refused, 8 were closed, and 4 were on the universe list in error.

In the second sampling stage, interviewers visited each selected facility and systematically selected a sample of male and female inmates using predetermined procedures. As a result, approximately 1 in every 100 males were selected in 4 strata and 1 in 83 in the male stratum. Depending on the stratum, 1 in 50, 25, 24, or 21 females were selected. A total of 6,133 inmates were interviewed, and 738 refused to participate, for a second stage nonresponse of 10.8%. The total nonresponse from both stages was 13.7%.

Based on the completed interviews, estimates for the entire population were developed using weighting factors derived from the original probability of selection in the sample. These factors were adjusted for variable rates of nonresponse across strata and inmate characteristics. Further adjustments were made to control the survey estimates to counts of jail inmates obtained from the 1993 Census of Jails and the 1995 Annual Survey of Jails.

### Accuracy of the survey estimates

The accuracy of the estimates from the 1996 Survey of Inmates in Local Jails depends on two types of error: sampling and measurement. Sampling error is variation that may occur by chance because a sample rather than a complete enumeration of the population was conducted. Measurement error can be attributed to many sources, such as nonresponse, differences in the interpretation of questions among inmates, recall difficulties, and processing errors. In any survey the full extent of the measurement error is never known.

The sampling error, as measured by an estimated standard error, varies by the size of the estimate and the size of the base population. Estimates of the standard errors for selected characteristics have been calculated for the 1996 and 1989 surveys of jail inmates

(see appendix tables). These standard errors may be used to construct confidence intervals around percentages. For example, the 95-percent confidence interval around the percent of inmates in 1996 who were in jail for a violent offense is approximately 26.3% plus or minus 1.96 times 0.77% (or 24.8% to 27.8%).

These standard errors may also be used to test the statistical significance of the difference between two sample

statistics by pooling the standard errors of the two sample estimates. For example, the standard error of the difference in the percent in jail for violent offenses in 1996 compared to 1989 would be 1.03 (or the square root of the sum of the squared standard errors in each year). The 95-percent confidence interval around the difference would be 1.96 times 1.03% (or 2.01%). Since the observed difference of 3.8% (26.3% minus 22.5%) is greater than 2.01%, the difference would be considered statistically significant.

All comparisons discussed in this report were statistically significant at the 95-percent confidence level. Because of the sample design, State, local, or other subnational estimates cannot be made.

#### *Information from inmate interviews*

Each respondent provided information that formed the base of the criminal history data. Responding to a series of questions, inmates reported on every previous sentence to probation and incarceration as a juvenile and an adult — offense types, number of charges, and where the sentences were served. From this information, a criminal history profile was constructed. A recidivist was defined as an inmate who reported having a past sentence to probation or incarceration.

Drug and treatment history data are also based on inmate responses. Inmates were asked a detailed set of questions about types of illegal drugs. Drug use histories were developed by examining the responses to questions for each type of drug.

Inmates who were unconvicted (awaiting arraignment, awaiting trial, or on trial) were not asked any questions about drug use during the month before the arrest for which they were currently detained.

#### *Measurement*

**Conviction status:** In the 1996 survey, inmates still serving sentence for an

offense — that is, on probation, parole, or other conditional release — when most recently admitted to jail were classified as sentenced. In prior surveys, status was based on the offense for which they were most recently admitted to jail. For the 1996 survey 55.2% were classified as sentenced, but that percentage would have been 45.9% under the classification of previous surveys.

**Educational attainment:** Starting with the 1996 survey, inmates who had not finished high school were asked if they had earned a GED or high school equivalency certificate, which was classified as a high school diploma. This change raised the percentage of high school graduates from 25.9% to 30.0%. GED responses were volunteered by respondents in prior surveys.

**Sentence length and time served:** Sentence length and time served were calculated for a custody population, the population held in jail at the time of the survey. Because data on sentence length and time served are restricted to persons in jail, they may overstate the average sentence and time to be served by those entering jail during a specified time period (an admission cohort). Persons with shorter sentences leave jail more quickly, so that the average sentence of a population in custody emphasizes those who stay longer.

#### *Blood alcohol concentration*

Blood alcohol concentration (BAC) refers to the number of grams of pure alcohol present in 100 milliliters of blood. Calculations of BAC used the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's formula, supplied by Dr. Alfred J. Farina, Research Psychologist, Research Division, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. The following formula permits BAC at the time of the offense to be estimated, based on the amount and time of drinking that jail inmates report. For further discussion, see the BJS report *Alcohol and Crime*, April 1998, NCJ 168632, page 32.

**Appendix table 1. Standard errors of selected characteristics of jail inmates, 1996 and 1989**

Selected characteristic	Standard errors for estimated percentages	
	1996	1989
Male/female	0.33%	0.47%
White	1.27%	0.78%
Black	1.28	0.79
Hispanic	0.75	0.61
Other	0.44	0.24
17 or younger	0.35%	0.19%
18-24	0.67	0.75
25-34	0.70	0.79
35-44	0.61	0.60
45-54	0.37	0.33
55 or older	0.18	0.21
<b>Current offense</b>		
Violent	0.77%	0.68 %
Property	0.71	0.75
Drug	0.66	0.69
Public-order	0.77	0.68
<b>Detention status</b>		
Convicted/unconvicted	0.95%	0.81 %
<b>Criminal justice status at arrest</b>		
No status	0.78%	0.81 %
Status	0.78	0.81
Probation	0.80	*
Parole	0.55	*
<b>Criminal history</b>		
Prior sentences/none	0.80%	0.69 %
<b>Drug use</b>		
Ever used drugs	0.60%	0.67 %
Ever used drugs regularly	0.75	0.79
Used drugs in month before offense	0.95	1.07
Used drugs at time of offense	0.89	0.96

Note: The standard errors for 1989 were calculated using the generalized variance function constant parameters that were not available for the 1996 survey.

\*Not applicable.

$$BAC(h)=[(A/(r \times p))/10] - (h \times k)$$

where

BAC(h) = blood alcohol concentration at time h

A = grams of ethanol consumed, which is equal to [(liquid ounces ethanol) x (.82)]/.035

r = reduced body mass (.68 for males and .55 for females)

p = weight in kilograms, which is equal to weight in pounds/2.2046

h = hours drinking

k = estimated rate at which the body metabolizes ethanol (.015 ounces per hour).

This report and many of its data, as well as other reports and statistics, can be found at the Bureau of Justice Statistics World Wide Web site: <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/>

The data from the 1996 Survey of Inmates in Local Jails can be obtained from the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data at the University of Michigan, 1-800-999-0960. The archive can also be accessed through the BJS web site. When at the archive site, search for data set ICPSR 6858.

**Appendix table 2. Standard errors of criminal justice characteristics of jail inmates, 1996**

Criminal justice characteristic	Standard errors for estimated percentages*				
	Male	Female	White	Black	Hispanic
<b>Most serious offense</b>					
Violent offenses	0.85%	0.94%	1.22%	1.16%	1.51%
Homicide	0.32	0.27	0.39	0.56	0.55
Sexual assault	0.32	0.05	0.54	0.38	0.54
Robbery	0.44	0.46	0.52	0.72	0.78
Assault	0.53	0.74	0.77	0.76	1.12
Property offenses	0.77%	1.55%	1.15%	1.05%	1.48%
Burglary	0.46	0.49	0.77	0.57	0.89
Larceny/theft	0.45	1.25	0.7	0.64	0.73
Motor vehicle theft	0.27	0.30	0.36	0.37	0.60
Fraud	0.34	0.88	0.61	0.46	0.45
Drug offenses	0.70%	1.28%	0.82%	1.14%	1.67%
Possession	0.54	0.93	0.65	0.85	1.20
Trafficking	0.49	0.92	0.53	0.81	1.27
Public-order offenses	0.81%	1.40%	1.18%	0.87%	1.74%
Weapons	0.24	0.19	0.27	0.38	0.53
Obstruction of justice	0.34	0.62	0.56	0.49	0.54
Traffic violations	0.30	0.35	0.49	0.31	0.68
Driving while intoxicated	0.54	0.80	1.01	0.32	1.22
Drunkenness/morals	0.22	0.66	0.30	0.30	0.55
Violation of probation/parole	0.28	0.41	0.46	0.30	0.66
<b>Criminal history</b>					
No previous sentence	0.81%	1.53%	1.14%	1.11%	1.70%
Current violent offense	0.59	0.77	0.79	0.84	1.09
Current drug offense	0.41	0.99	0.51	0.61	1.15
Current other offense	0.51	1.17	0.81	0.70	1.18
Violent recidivists	0.84%	1.06%	1.33%	1.12%	1.58%
Current and prior violent	0.55	0.52	0.79	0.76	1.16
Current violent only	0.48	0.58	0.74	0.72	0.82
Prior violent only	0.60	0.73	0.86	0.84	1.10
Nonviolent recidivists	0.90%	1.53%	1.37%	1.10%	1.71%
Prior minor public-order only	0.26	0.61	0.44	0.36	0.54
Current and prior drug offense only	0.41	0.73	0.47	0.65	1.00
Other prior offenses	0.81	0.86	1.33	0.92	1.60

\*See tables 5 and 9 for the survey estimates.

The Bureau of Justice Statistics is the statistical agency of the U.S. Department of Justice. Jan M. Chaiken, Ph.D., is director.

BJS Special Reports address a specific topic in depth from one or more datasets that cover many topics.

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