

JAIL BULLETIN

Number 82

January, 1992

BJS Describes Drug Characteristics of Jail Inmates

Money for illegal drugs was cited by 13% of convicted jail inmates as a reason they had committed their offense. Among inmates who had used drugs in the month before the offense for which they were convicted, 27% said that they had committed the crime to get money for drugs. Nearly 1 in 3 robbers and burglars said they had committed their crimes to obtain money for drugs. Responding to other questions about their drug-use histories, more than a quarter of all convicted jail inmates said they were under the influence of drugs at the time of the crime. At least 4 in every 10 convicted inmates in local jails said they were using drugs during the month before the crime; 1 in 4 said they were using cocaine or crack.

These, and many other characteristics of persons held in local jails throughout the United States were reported in a recent publication of the Bureau of Justice Statistics. The report, *Drugs and Jail Inmates; 1989**, focuses on inmates who were charged with or convicted of a drug offense or who had used drugs. This study primarily used data from the 1989 Survey of inmates in Local Jails. The survey was sponsored by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) and was carried out by the Bureau of the Census, and entailed interviews with a representative sample of 395,554 inmates held in 3,312 city and county jails.

Other findings include:

- o Persons charged with drug offenses accounted for 23% of all persons held in local jails in 1989. In 1983 about 9% of those held in local jails were charged with drug offenses as their most serious charge. Drug offenses included possession, trafficking, importation, manufacturing, and other illegal drug activities.

- o Among those in local jails charged with a drug offense, the percentage of blacks, Hispanics, and women rose between 1983 and 1989. The number of black inmates increased from 35 % to 48 % of all jail inmates charged with a drug offense, the number of Hispanic inmates increased from 20 % to 25 %, and women from 9 % to 14 %.
- o Half the offenders convicted of a drug offense and sentenced to a local jail had a sentence of 9 months or less, the same as in 1983.
- o More than 70 % of those in jail for a drug charge had served at least one prior sentence of probation or incarceration. About 1 in 6 had been previously convicted of a violent crime, and about 1 in 3 had been previously convicted of a drug offense.
- o While about three-quarters of all jail inmates in 1989 had used at least one illegal drug during their life, over half (55 %) reported having used a major drug such as cocaine, crack, heroin, PCP, LSD, or methadone outside a treatment program.
- o About 50 % of the inmates held in local jails in 1989 had used cocaine or crack, compared to 38 % in 1983. Cocaine and crack were the only drugs that had a higher percentage of users in 1989 than in 1983.
- o An estimated 30 % of convicted offenders in local jails had been using drugs daily in the month before their offense. About 50 % of these daily users had been using cocaine or crack.
- o In 1989, convicted women in local jails were more likely than convicted men to report having used a major drug every day in the month preceding their offense.
- o Drug use in general, and use of major drugs in particular, was the most prevalent among jail inmates reporting that their parents had abused drugs. These jail inmates also reported substantially younger ages of first drug use.
- o About 48 % of convicted jail inmates who were daily users of a major drug in the month before their current offense had participated in a drug treatment program; 15 % were taking part in one while incarcerated.

**A free copy of the report, "Drugs and Jail Inmates: 1989", may be secured from NCJRS by calling (800) 851-3420.*

This month's "Jail Bulletin" is taken from the "Detention Reporter" and is based on a Bureau of Justice Statistics Report, "Drugs and Jail Inmates: 1989". The Detention Reporter is available monthly from CRS, Inc., (207) 685-9090, Rod Miller, Editor.

QUIZ

Nebraska Jail Standards require that jail staff receive eighteen (18) hours of in-service training each year. The Jail Bulletin may be used to supplement in-service training if an officer studies the Bulletin, completes the quiz and this process is documented by the jail administrator for review during jail inspections.

SUBJECT: BJS DESCRIBES DRUG CHARACTERISTICS OF JAIL INMATES

JANUARY, 1992

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NAME _____

DATE _____

1. Almost 1 out of _____ robbers and burglars said they committed their crime to get money for drugs.
2. Almost one-fourth of all persons held in jail in 1989 were there for drug offenses.
TRUE FALSE
3. What percent of inmates report having used a major drug in their lifetime? _____%
4. In 1989, convicted women in jail were less likely than convicted men to report having used a major drug every day in the month preceding their offense.
TRUE FALSE

CREDIT: One-half hour credit for Jail Inservice Training requirement.

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Answer Key

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2. Almost one-fourth of all persons held in jail in 1989 were there for drug offenses.
TRUE FALSE
3. What percent of inmates report having used a major drug in their lifetime? 55 %
4. In 1989, convicted women in jail were less likely than convicted men to report having used a major drug every day in the month preceding their offense.
TRUE **FALSE**

CREDIT: One-half hour credit for Jail Inservice Training requirement.

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