



SUICIDE AND HOMICIDE IN STATE PRISONS AND LOCAL JAILS

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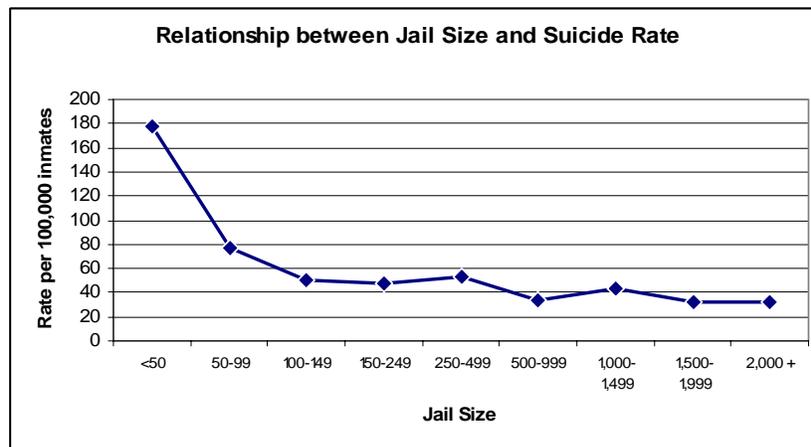
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In August 2005, the Bureau of Justice Statistics issued the special report, “Suicide and Homicide in State Prisons and Local Jails.” This report is the first of a series based on data collected from the Deaths in Custody Reporting Form. Data collection follows the implementation of the Death in Custody Reporting Act (DICRA) of 2000, which was begun to assess the frequency and scope of its data on inmate mortality — from deaths occurring in the process of arrest, through deaths occurring during incarceration. Each state receiving funding from the Violent Offender Incarceration and Truth-in-Sentencing (VOI/TIS) incentive grant program is required to submit DICRA data.

Data used in the report covers the years 2000-2002 (state prison data covers the period 2001-2002), and highlights inmate and facility characteristics related to high risks of suicide and homicide. The following data and graphics come from this BJS report.

Suicides in jails

- Jail suicide rates have dropped sharply from 129 per 100,000 inmates in 1983 to 47 per 100,000 in 2002.
 - 32 percent of jail deaths in 2002 were due to suicides, as compared to 1983 when the majority (56 percent) of jail deaths were due to suicides.
- Rates of suicide were closely related to jail size — the smallest facilities reported the highest suicide rates per 100,000 inmates



- Forty-eight percent of all jail suicides took place during the inmate's first week following admission.
- Eighty percent of jail suicides took place within the inmates cell/room. Time of day when suicides occurred showed no specific patterns.
- Demographics: In jails, suicide rates are highest for whites and males. An increase in age is also related to an increase in suicide rate, with the exception of those under age 18, who have the highest suicide rate in local jails.
- The suicide rate of violent jail inmates (92 per 100,000) was nearly triple that of nonviolent offenders (31 per 100,000).

Suicide in prisons

- Prison suicide rates have dropped sharply, from 34 per 100,000 in 1980 to 16 per 100,000 in 1990, and have since remained stable.
- In Ohio, there were a total of 229 prisoner deaths from 2001-2002; eight of these were suicides.
 - Ohio's annual suicide rate was nine per 100,000, compared to 14 per 100,000 for the U.S.
- In prison, suicides were not as concentrated around admission. Seven percent took place within the first month, and 65 percent took place after the first year of confinement.
- Eighty-seven percent of prison suicides took place within the inmates cell/room. No specific patterns were seen regarding time of day when prison suicides took place.
- Demographics: Prison suicide rates were similar for males and females. Suicide rates were similar across all age groups (ranging from 13-14 suicides per 100,000 inmates) except for those exceedingly few prisoners under age 18 (52 suicides per 100,000 inmates). White inmates had the highest suicide rate of all state prisoners.
- In prison, violent offenders were more than twice as likely to commit suicide as nonviolent offenders (19 per 100,000 vs. 9 per 100,000). Note that these rates are much lower than jail suicide rates.

Homicides in jails

- Jail homicides are very infrequent. Jail homicide rates declined slightly, from five per 100,000 in 1983 to three per 100,000 in 2002.
- White, Black, and Hispanic inmates were equally as likely to be victims of jail homicide.
- Violent offenders were the most likely type of offender to be killed in local jail.

Homicides in prisons

- Prison homicide rates declined sharply from 54 per 100,000 in 1980 to four per 100,000 in 2002. This represents a decrease in prison homicide of more than 92 percent.
- In Ohio, there were a total of 229 prisoner deaths from 2001-2002; two of these were homicides.
 - Ohio's annual homicide rate was two per 100,000, compared to four per 100,000 for the U.S.
- Homicide rates were less than 10 per 100,000 across all racial/ethnic groups, but were highest for Hispanics (seven per 100,000 inmates), followed by White inmates (five per 100,000) and Black inmates (two per 100,000).
- There was no relationship between homicide rate and age.
- The homicide rate varied little across offense type, with the exception of arsonists (16 homicides per 100,000), kidnapers (15 per 100,000), and probation/parole violators (12 per 100,000).
- The median time served in state prison by inmate homicide victims was 44 months.
- Sixty-one percent of state prison homicides took place in prisoners' cells/rooms. Twenty-nine percent of prison homicides took place in common areas within prisons, such as cafeterias, libraries, workshops, and recreational yards. Prison homicides were more than three times as likely to occur in the morning than between midnight and 6 AM.

Deaths in prison due to other causes

- Overall, relatively few deaths in prison were due to suicides and homicides. The majority were due to illness and natural causes

State prison inmate mortality rate, per 100,000 inmates.

Year	All causes	Illness/natural causes	AIDS	Suicide	Homicide
2002	246	198	20	14	4
1995	308	165	100	16	9

Table 3. Local jail and State prison inmate mortality rates, per 100,000 inmates, by selected characteristics

Characteristic	Average annual mortality rate, per 100,000 inmates					
	Local jail inmates, 2000-02			State prison inmates, 2001-02		
	All causes	Suicide	Homicide	All causes	Suicide	Homicide
All inmates	148	48	3	244	14	4
Gender						
Male	150	50	3	251	14	4
Female	130	32	0	140	10	0
Age						
Under 18	138	101	0	52	52	0
18-24	60	38	3	34	14	3
25-34	99	47	2	63	14	3
35-44	179	53	4	182	14	4
45-54	349	52	7	571	13	3
55 or older	694	58	0	2,019	13	4
Race/Hispanic origin						
White, non-Hispanic	219	96	3	327	22	5
Black, non-Hispanic	118	16	3	207	8	2
Hispanic	98	30	3	243	18	7

Note: Jail inmate mortality rates are per 100,000 inmates held, based on average daily population (ADP). Inmate populations of various demographic subgroups are estimates based on the Annual Survey of Jails and the 2002 Survey of Inmates in Local Jails. State prison rates are per 100,000 inmates held in custody on June 30. Prisoner demographic subgroups are estimates based on the June 30 National Prisoner Statistics custody counts and demographic data from the National Corrections Reporting Program.

To view the full report, *Suicide and Homicide in State Prisons and Local Jails*, go to the BJS website: <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/shsplj.htm>