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Mortality in State Prisons, 2001-2014 - Statistical Tables

December 15, 2016

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MORTALITY RATE AMONG STATE PRISONERS WAS STABLE FROM 2013 TO 2014 BUT INCREASED AMONG FEDERAL PRISONERS AND LOCAL JAIL INMATES

WASHINGTON – In 2014, a total of 3,483 inmates died in state prisons, 444 in federal prisons and 1,053 in local jails, the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) announced today. The mortality rate for state prisoners was stable from 2013 to 2014 (273 deaths per 100,000 state prisoners compared to 275 per 100,000). Among federal prisoners, the mortality rate increased from 230 to 262 deaths per 100,000, and the rate for inmates in local jails increased from 136 to 140 deaths per 100,000 jail inmates over the year.

These findings are based on data from BJS's Deaths in Custody Reporting Program (DCRP), which has annually collected counts of inmate deaths in local jails since 2000 and deaths in state and federal prisons since 2001.

In state prisons, illness remained the most common cause of death, accounting for 87 percent of deaths in 2014. Cancer and heart disease accounted for more than half of state prisoner

deaths during the year.

From 2013 to 2014, the number of suicides in state prisons increased by 30 percent, from 192 to 249 suicides. Suicides were seven percent of all deaths in state prisons in 2014. Accidental deaths (39) and deaths due to drug or alcohol intoxication (49) each accounted for one percent of state prisoner deaths in 2014.

In 2014, more than a third (425 of 1,053 deaths) of jail inmate deaths occurred within the first seven days of admission. Suicide was the leading cause of death in local jails and accounted for more than a third (35 percent) of all jail inmate deaths. From 2013 to 2014, the number of suicides increased 13 percent, from 328 to 372 deaths.

Heart disease was the second leading cause of death in local jails and made up nearly a quarter (23 percent) of all jail inmate deaths in 2014. Accidental deaths and deaths due to homicide were the least common causes of death in 2014; each accounted for two percent of deaths in local jails.
Other findings include—

- In 2014, 80 percent of jails reported zero deaths and 14 percent reported one death.
- The majority of state prisoners who died in 2014 were prisoners age 55 or older (59 percent), followed by prisoners ages 45 to 54 (24 percent).
- Between 2001 and 2014, the majority of federal prisoners' deaths (88 percent) were attributed to natural causes. During this period, unnatural deaths accounted for less than 10 percent of all federal prisoner deaths, which includes suicides (four percent), homicides (three percent) and accidents (one percent).
- Between 2001 and 2014, the mortality rate from cancer, heart disease and liver disease for male state prisoners was twice the rate for females.
- Female (three per 100,000) and male (four per 100,000) state prisoners died from drug or alcohol intoxication at nearly equal rates between 2001 and 2014.

The reports, *Mortality in Local Jails, 2000-2014 - Statistical Tables* (*NCJ 250169*) and *Mortality in State Prisons, 2001-2014 - Statistical Tables* (*NCJ 250150*), were written by BJS statistician Margaret E. Noonan. The reports, related documents and additional information about BJS's statistical publications and programs can be found on the BJS website at http://www.bjs.gov/.

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