



Department of Justice



Office of Justice Programs

ADVANCE FOR RELEASE AT 10 A.M. EST
MONDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2015
[HTTP://WWW.BJS.GOV/](http://www.bjs.gov/)

BUREAU OF JUSTICE STATISTICS
Contact: Kara McCarthy (202) 307-1241
After hours: (202) 598-9320

FEWER VETERANS IN PRISON AND JAIL IN 2011-12 THAN 2004

WASHINGTON – In 2011-12, an estimated 8 percent of all inmates in state and federal prison and local jail had previously served in the U.S. military, the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) announced today. This represented an estimated 181,500 veterans serving time in correctional facilities, a decline from the estimated 206,500 veterans in prison and jail in 2004. An estimated 131,500 veterans were in prison and 50,000 were in local jail in 2011-12.

The estimates are based on data from BJS's surveys of a nationally representative sample of inmates in U.S. prisons and jails, conducted in 2011-12 and in 2004 (the last year for which BJS collected data on incarcerated veterans). For comparison, estimates of nonveteran inmates were standardized to the veteran inmate population by sex, age, race, and Hispanic origin.

Between 2004 and 2011-12, the number of veterans incarcerated in prison declined 6 percent (down 8,500 veterans), while the number in local jails declined 25 percent (down 16,500 veterans). In 2011-12 the total incarceration rate of veterans in the United States (855 per 100,000 veterans) was lower than the rate for nonveterans (968 per 100,000 U.S. residents).

When standardized to the veteran population, veterans in prison were more likely to be convicted of a violent offense but to have fewer prior arrests than nonveterans. Nearly two-thirds (64 percent) of veterans in prison were sentenced for a violent offense compared to about half (52 percent) of nonveterans in prison.

An estimated 43 percent of veterans in prison had four or more prior arrests compared to 55 percent of nonveterans in prison. Twenty-two percent of veterans in prison had one prior arrest compared to 16 percent of nonveterans in prison. Compared to nonveterans in jail (8 percent), a larger proportion of veterans (13 percent) had only one prior arrest.

Veterans tended to be serving longer sentences than nonveterans. More veterans (16 percent) in prison were serving life sentences than nonveterans (14 percent) in prison. Fewer veterans (17 percent) in prison than nonveterans (21 percent) were serving sentences of less than 4 years.

(MORE)

Almost half of veterans in prison (48 percent) and jail (44 percent) served in the U.S. military for less than 3 years. About a quarter of veterans in prison (24 percent) and jail (27 percent) served for 5 or more years. More than three-quarters (77 percent) of veterans in prison and jail received an honorable discharge or a general discharge under honorable conditions. Five percent of veterans in prison and 6 percent of veterans in jail received dishonorable or bad conduct discharges.

About half of all veterans in prison (48 percent) and jail (55 percent) had ever been told by a mental health professional they had a mental disorder. Incarcerated veterans who saw combat were more likely than noncombat veterans to have ever been told they had a mental disorder. Veterans in prison and jail were more likely than nonveterans to report ever being told they had post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Twice the proportion of veterans compared to nonveterans in prison (23 percent of veterans and 11 percent of nonveterans) and jail (31 percent of veterans and 15 percent of nonveterans) reported that a mental health professional had ever told them they had PTSD.

An ambulatory disability was the most common disability among veterans and nonveterans in prison (30 percent each of veterans and nonveterans) and jail (18 percent each of veterans and 20 percent of nonveterans). After adjusting for age and race, veterans in prison were as likely as nonveterans to report each disability type, and veterans in jail were more likely to report a hearing disability than nonveterans.

Other findings –

- Veterans in prison were an average age of 49, 12 years older than nonveterans in prison who were an average age of 37; veterans in jail were an average age of 43, 11 years older than nonveterans who were an average age of 32.
- Half (50 percent) of veterans in prison were white compared to more than a quarter (27 percent) of nonveterans; 44 percent of veterans in jail were white compared to 31 percent of nonveterans.
- Black and Hispanic inmates made up a significantly smaller proportion of incarcerated veterans, compared to incarcerated nonveterans.
- A larger proportion of nonveterans than veterans were in prison for property (17 percent for nonveterans compared to 12 percent for veterans), drug (19 percent compared to 14 percent) and DUI/DWI (4 percent compared to 3 percent) offenses.

The report, *Veterans in Prison and Jail, 2011-12* (NCJ 249144), was written by Jennifer Bronson, E. Ann Carson and Margaret Noonan of BJS, and Marcus Berzofsky of RTI International. The report, related documents and additional information about the Bureau of Justice Statistics' statistical publications and programs can be found on the BJS website at <http://www.bjs.gov/>.

###

The Office of Justice Programs (OJP), headed by Assistant Attorney General Karol V. Mason, provides federal leadership in developing the nation's capacity to prevent and control crime, administer justice, and assist victims. OJP has six components: the Bureau of Justice Assistance; the Bureau of Justice Statistics; the National Institute of Justice; the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention; the Office for Victims of Crime; and the Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking. More information about OJP can be found at <http://www.ojp.gov>.