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# Sexual Abuse of Juvenile Detention Center Inmates Drop, But High Rates of Abuse Still Exist, Study Says

BY **MELISSA LEMIEUX** ON 12/11/19 AT 9:17 PM EST



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**A** new report from the Bureau of Justice Statistics [BJS] released Wednesday says the number of youths who report they have been sexually abused in juvenile detention facilities have decreased. But a notably high rate of sexual assaults still occur in facilities, specifically in 12 facilities stretching from Oregon to Florida.

Comprised of data compiled from 6,000 anonymous interviews conducted during 2018 at 330 different detention facilities. They were asked if they had experienced any sexual coercion or forced sexual contact, from either fellow inmates or adult faculty. The contact in question ranged from rape to being shown movies with sexual content.

Of those interviewed, 7.1 percent said they had experienced sexual victimization in the previous 12 months, a drop compared to the previous survey conducted by the BJS, in 2012. That survey conducted then showed 9.5 of those interviewed

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Board.

Twelve of the facilities showed higher than average reports of victimization. Three of those facilities were in Florida, three in Texas, and one detention center each in Oregon, Arkansas, Idaho, Georgia, Ohio and New Jersey.

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Inmates at the Liberty Juvenile Unit for Specialized Treatment in Florida reported the highest rate of abuse, with 26 percent of them reporting abuse. Hastings Comprehensive Mental Health Treatment Program and Gulf Academy, both in Florida, reported 22 and 21 percent had experienced victimization. Facilities in St. Anthony, Idaho, reported 13 percent of their inmates had suffered victimization. One detention center, in Lewiston, Idaho, reported no victimizations.

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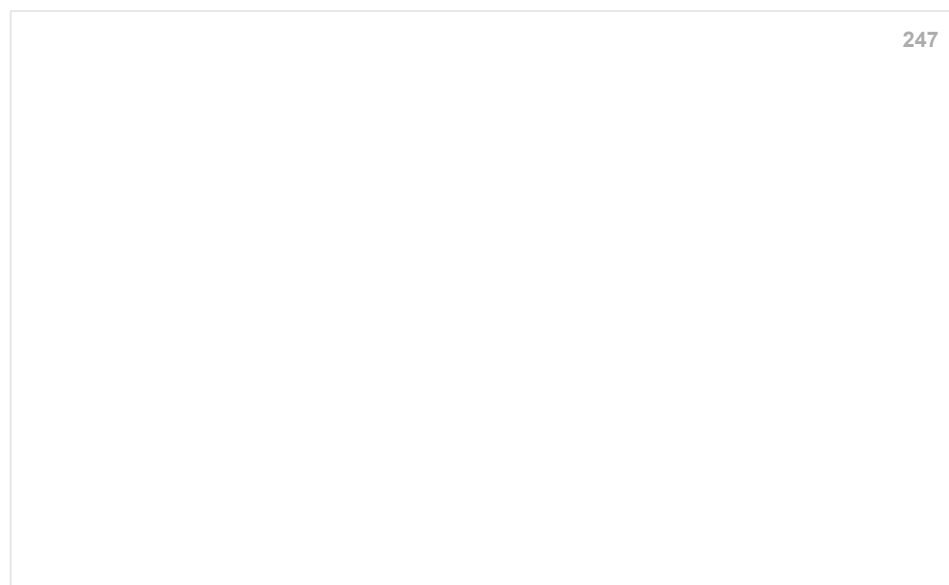
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strides in preventing sexual abuse, said Lovisa Staninow, the executive director of Just Detention International, an organization seeking to end sexual abuse in detention, in a statement to The Associated Press. "But even one sexual assault is too many and, as the report makes clear, this violence remains commonplace in youth facilities across the U.S."

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Marsha Levick, chief legal officer for the Juvenile Law Center, a rights organization within the child welfare and justice systems, told the Associated Press, "The fact that we see such variability across and within states of course heightens the need to ensure that we're asking every child so we really understand what the victimization looks like."



Systemic oversights and lack of investigation into the accusations were pointed out as failings. "They need to step it up, quite frankly," said Levick, who added that 

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experience mental health problems.

The next survey will determine if the Prison Rape Elimination Act has had any effect on the numbers.

A prisoner's hands inside a punishment cell wing at Angola prison. The Louisiana State Penitentiary, also known as Angola, and nicknamed the "Alcatraz of the South" and "The Farm" is a maximum-security prison farm in Louisiana operated by the Louisiana Department of Public Safety & Corrections.

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