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## Work in America's Jails:

### NIJ Provides First National Profile

Since 1987, the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) has sponsored extensive research and development in the area of jail industries and inmate work programs. A recent national research effort has provided the basis for the first-ever "profile" of inmate work in the nation's jails. The results of the **NIJ National Jail Work/Program Inventory** will be described in detail in an upcoming NIJ publication. This document provides an initial summary and highlights.

**Research Base.** NIJ's Jail Industry Program, operated through a grant to CRS, Inc., sent one-page inventory forms to all of the nation's 3,500 jails in 1993. 386 jails responded (an 11% sample), providing a strong statistical base from which to describe national practices. The total capacity of the jails that responded is 93,070 (26% of the total bedspace capacity of U.S. jails). Responses were received from jails in 48 states; Rhode Island and Connecticut, which operate consolidated local/state systems, did not respond. Responses were received from jails of all size, as shown below:

Jail Capacity	Percent of Responses	Percent of all Jail <sup>1</sup>
Up to 49 beds	37.9%	66.9%
50 - 249 beds	45.7%	24.1%
250 - 499 beds	7.0%	4.8%
500 - 999 beds	6.2%	2.7%
1000 or more	3.1%	1.5%

1. Bureau of Justice Statistics,  
1988 Census of Local Jails

**How Many Work?** The proportion of inmates that work at least *at six-hour day* varied by the size of the facility:

Capacity	Percent of Inmates Who Work 6 or More Hours/Day (Average)
1 to 49 beds	11.6%
50 - 249 beds	22.0%
250 or more beds	23.4%
All jails	18.2%

**Estimate of National Workforce.** An initial analysis of the responses suggests that over *80,000 jail inmates* currently work 6 or more hours daily. If these findings are applied to the current jail population which exceeds 440,000 inmates, it suggests that "full-time" jail inmate workers contribute over 164 million hours of labor annually. This does not acknowledge the labor of inmates work less than 6 hours daily. Viewed another way, this research suggests that it would take nearly 90,000 full-time staff to replace the hours currently worked by inmates in the nation's jails. It is interesting to note that, according to the most recently published jail census, jails employ nearly 91,000 full-time staff. There are strong incentives for jail managers to increase their inmate workforce. For example, a one percent increase in the proportion of jail inmates who work 6 hours or more daily would produce 9,000,000 more hours of labor annually in the United States.

**Workweek.** A wide range of hours were reported to comprise inmates' workweeks, ranging from a low of 2 hours, to a high of 84 hours. The average inmate workweek was reported to be 39 hours.

**Who Works?** Respondents were asked to describe the jail population on June 30, 1993 (which is the "snapshot" day that was used for the five-year jail census conducted by the Bureau of Justice Assistance). The numbers and types of inmates working on that day was relatively consistent between the various capacities.

Capacity	% of Sentenced working on 6/30/93	% of Unsentenced working on 6/30/93
1 - 49 beds	28%	3.8%
50 - 249 beds	35%	4.9%
250 or more beds	32%	0.1%
<b>All jails</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>4.8%</b>

**Compensation.** Some jails pay inmates for their labor (19%). Of those that pay inmates, the average daily wage was \$4.08. Daily pay ranged from a low of \$.03 to a high of \$40. Nearly two-thirds of the jails compensated inmates with time off of their sentence (62.6%). Privileges were used to compensate inmates in nearly half of the jails (47%). Eighteen percent (18%) of the respondents reported providing other types of compensation, which are summarized below:

% Response	Type of Compensation (Privileges, Other) (No. of responses if more than one in parentheses)
11.8%	<b>Food:</b> Barbecue (2), Extra Beverages (6), Extra Food (26), Feed Three Meals (2), Inmates Fed, Kitchen Access, Ice, Microwave (2), Eat in Dining Hall,
9.8%	<b>Visits:</b> Contact Visits (16), Extra Visits (14), Visitation (5)
8.1%	<b>Extra Privileges</b> (6), Benefits, Extra Library Time, Extra Recreation (9), Better Recreation Equipment, Later Lockdown (3), No Lockdown (5), Weight Machines in Dayroom
7.6%	<b>Better Conditions of Confinement,</b> Housing (3), Furniture, Special Housing/Dorms/Better Cells (10)
5.1%	<b>Fees/Fines/Costs:</b> Do not pay room/board, Free Dental, Free Medical, Inmate Program to Pay Existing Fines (Inmates Volunteer), No Housing Charge (2), Work Off Fines/Costs (12)
5.1%	<b>Commissary</b> (6): discounts (3), extra (6), Free Cigarettes/Coffee, Free Store Call, Vending Machines
4.8%	<b>Release:</b> Early Release (2), Furloughs (5), Good Time (8), Passes (2)
4.2%	<b>Classification/Status:</b> Minimum Security Classification (4), Trusty Status (4), Work Release (7)
3.7%	<b>Smoking Privileges</b>
3.7%	<b>Television/Entertainment:</b> Better Cable T.V., Headset Radios, Movies, T.V./Extra T.V. (9), V.C.R.
3.1%	<b>Movement:</b> Allowed Outside (3), Freedom to Move About Facility, Limited Outside Movement, Mobility, Out of Cell Time (5)
2.5%	<b>Phone</b>
2.2%	<b>Community Service Time</b>

**What Work is Performed?** Perhaps the most interesting component of the work inventory is the identification of the range of work that is assigned to inmates. The table below suggests that expanding roles that inmates may assume while confined in jails, and may offer some new ideas to jail managers who are looking for ways to reduce inmate idleness.

<u>Percent Responses</u>	<u>Type of Work Performed by Inmates</u>
95.6%	Cleaning
86.4%	Laundry
80.4%	Groundswork
79.6%	Food Service
70.2%	Maintenance
36.3%	Other (see below)
6.0%	Painting
6.0%	Highway/County Road Litter/Litter Patrol
5.2%	Washing/Waxing Cars
5.0%	Recycling/Landfill
4.4%	Road Work
4.4%	Community Service
3.9%	Clerical/Office, Filing, Secretarial
2.8%	Carpenter Work
2.8%	Farming/Livestock
2.8%	Landscaping
2.8%	Auto Repair/Mechanic
1.9%	Humane Society
1.9%	Public Works
1.9%	Construction
1.9%	Moving
1.9%	Commissary Operations
1.7%	Education Programs/Help Teach Other Inmates/Tutors
1.4%	County Parks
1.4%	Print Shop
1.4%	Law Library
1.4%	Build/Renovate Houses
1.1%	Clean Cemetery
1.1%	Trash Collection
1.1%	Fairgrounds
1.1%	Sewing/Tailor Shop
0.8%	Butcher Shop, Logging/Wood Cutting, Load/Unload Trucks, Barber Envelope Stuffing, Food Distribution
0.5%	Building Community Playgrounds, Sign Engraving, Repair/Build Sidewalks Electrical, Janitorial Work, Maintenance/Groundwork- Courthouse, Fire Agencies, Receptionist, Answer Telephones, Walk dogs, dog grooming.

Individual Responses: Stocking Supplies, Small-Engine Repair, Metal Shop, Medical, Activity Aids, Work off sentence, Make Log Books, Greenhouse, Sanitation, Sales Work, Photographer, Shop, Setting Up for Community Events, Laborer, Non-Profit Projects, Computer work, Clean Courthouse, Event Auto Parking, Chaplain's Assistant, Field Gleaning, Putting Docks In, Assembly Work, Carpet Installation, Department of Natural Resources Work, Clean Pews, Tree Planting, Helping with Art Fair, Disaster cleanup, County Water Works, Snow removal

Where is work performed? Respondents described the locations at which inmates work as follows:

<u>Where inmates work</u>	<u>Percent of Respondents</u>
Inside the jail	93%
Adjacent to jail (same site)	73%
Away from the jail	63%

Value of Inmate Labor. Many respondents attempted to place a value on the services that inmates provided.

<u>Capacity</u>	<u>Number of Responses</u>	<u>Average Value \$</u>	<u>Range of Responses</u>
1 to 49 beds	36	\$85,132	\$170 - \$1,266,720
50 - 249 beds	52	\$191,609	\$260,000 - 1,161,000
250 or more	33	\$544,293	\$8,190 - 3,000,000
<u>All jails</u>	<u>121</u>	<u>\$253,202</u>	<u>\$170 - \$3,000,000</u>

Who Benefits from Inmate Labor? Respondents reported that they were the primary beneficiaries of inmate labor, as demonstrated in the table below.

<u>Recipient of Inmate Labor</u>	<u>Percent of Respondents</u> (total responses = 363)
Own jail	95.1%
Other agency in own unit of government	63.5%
Other municipalities	27.9%
Other counties	3.2%
Non-profit corporations	37.6%
Private sector	4.3%
Other (inmates, citizens, churches, state and federal gov't.)	6.8%

To Learn More....

Since 1990 the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) has funded CRS, Inc. to serve as a central source of information about jail industries and work programs. This "clearinghouse" function has received continuation funding from the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA). To find out more about inmate work and industry programs in jails, contact:

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