

NATIONAL INMATE SURVEY (NIS)

Years Survey Included Sexual and Gender Minority (SGM)- Related Questions

2007–2012

Survey Description

The National Inmate Survey (NIS) is part of the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) National Prison Rape Statistics Program (NPRSP), which collects reported sexual violence from administrative records and allegations of sexual victimization directly from victims, through surveys of inmates in prisons and jails and surveys of youth in juvenile correctional facilities. The NIS annually gathers mandated data on the incidence and prevalence of sexual assault in correctional facilities, as funding permits. The survey was conducted in three iterations from 2007–2012. There is no information pertaining to administration of the NIS beyond 2012.

Survey Sample Population

In the third administration year (NIS-3), the survey was conducted in 233 state and federal prisons, 358 jails, and 15 special confinement facilities operated by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the U.S. Military, and correctional authorities in Indian country. The survey was administered to 92,449 inmates age 18 or older: 38,251 inmates in state and federal prisons, 52,926 in jails, 573 in ICE facilities, 539 in military facilities, and 160 in Indian country jails. The survey was also administered to juveniles ages 16–17 in adult prisons and jails.

Survey Mode

The NIS was conducted from 2007–2012 in three iterations known as NIS-1 (conducted 2007), NIS-2 (conducted 2008–2009), and NIS-3 (conducted 2011–2012). Interviews averaged 35 minutes in length and used computer-assisted personal interview (CAPI) and audio computer assisted self-interview (ACASI) data collection methods. For approximately the first 2 minutes, survey interviewers conducted a personal interview using CAPI to obtain interviewee background information and date of admission to the facility. For the remainder of the interview, respondents interacted with a computer-administered questionnaire using a touchscreen and synchronized audio instructions delivered via headphones. Respondents completed the ACASI portion of the interview in private, with the interviewer either leaving the room or moving away from the computer.

Inmates are randomly assigned to receive either a survey of sexual victimization or a survey of mental and physical health, past drug and alcohol use, and treatment for substance abuse (questions from which are also used to pad out time for respondents completing the victimization survey quickly). A shorter paper questionnaire (or paper-and-pencil instrument [PAPI]) is available for inmates who are unable to come to the private interviewing room or interact with the computer.

SGM-Related Survey Questions

Survey

The questions below are asked of NIS respondents.

The following questions are asked using the CAPI and ACASI data collection methods. Questions asked using the PAPI method are noted in the question history section.

| Category | Question | Question History |
|-------------------|---|---|
| Sexual Identity | (D5) Do you consider yourself to be heterosexual or 'straight', bisexual, or homosexual or gay? 1. Bi-sexual 2. [If R is male] Homosexual or Gay 3. [If R is female], DK, Refused] Homosexual, Gay, or Lesbian 4. Other DK/REF | This is the only version of the question that has been used. In the 2012 and 2009 PAPI version of the survey, this question was labeled question 9. This question was not included in the 2007 PAPI version of the survey. |
| Sexual Attraction | Currently no questions are asked in this category. | Not applicable. |
| Sexual Behavior | [If D3 "number of partners" NE 1 (no partners)] (D4) Before you entered this facility, had you had sex with men only, women only, or both men and women? 1. Men only 2. Women only 3. Both men and women DK/REF | This is the only version of the question that has been used. |
| Gender Identity | (D2) Are you male, female, or transgender? 1. Male 2. Female 3. Transgender DK/REF | This is the only version of the question that has been used. |

| Category | Question | Question History |
|-------------------------|--|--|
| Household Relationships | (D1) Are you currently married, widowed, divorced or separated, or have you never married? 1. Married 2. Widowed 3. Divorced 4. Separated (For reasons other than incarceration) 5. Never married | This is the only version of the question that has been used. |

Response Rates

The overall response rate for NIS-3 comprised 61,351 jail inmates who participated in the survey, yielding a response rate of 61%. Approximately 90% of participating inmates (54,137) received the sexual victimization survey. More information on the number of participating inmates in each jail can be viewed in the appendix, table 5 of the “Sexual Victimization in Prisons and Jails Reported by Inmates, 2011–12” press release. The press release can be accessed through this link: <https://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=pbdetail&iid=4923>

ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND

Organizations Involved

The NPRSP requires a statistical review and analysis of NIS data under the Prison Rape Elimination Act of 2003 (PREA; P.L. 108–79). Due to the sensitive nature of violent victimization and potential reluctance to report sexual assault, estimates of the prevalence of such acts do not rely on a single measure; thus, BJS developed the NPRSP, designed to collect multiple measures on the incidence and prevalence of sexual assault.

No existing data collection could fully respond to PREA requirements. BJS, with the aid of correctional practitioners, researchers, and special interest groups, developed, tested, and revised each collection prior to full national implementation. For these reasons, data collections were rolled out consecutively, rather than concurrently.

Survey Links

Questionnaires

Find survey questionnaires on the main BJS website. Click “Data Collections” on the menu bar, then “View By Topic,” then “Corrections.” Scroll down to “National Inmate Survey (NIS).”

Questionnaires are organized by year and categorized by PAPI for males and females. Find the most recent questionnaires by following the link below: <https://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=dcdetail&iid=278>

Data

Data are currently not available.

General Information

All information on the NIS can be found on BJS’ website: <https://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=dcdetail&iid=278>

References

Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics. United States Department of Justice. Inmates With Mental Health Problems Reported High Rates of Sexual Victimization in 2011–12. (2014). <https://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=dcdetail&iid=278>

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Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics. United States Department of Justice. Indicators of Mental Health Problems Reported by Prisoners and Jail Inmates, 2011–2012. (2017). <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/imhprpji1112.pdf>

Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics. United States Department of Justice. Data Collection: National Inmate Survey (NIS). (2018). <https://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=dcdetail&iid=278#Methodology>