

NATIONAL SURVEY OF YOUTH IN CUSTODY – OVERVIEW

Westat is working with the US Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) to conduct the National Study of Youth in Custody (NSYC). Westat recently completed the first round of this study. It is part of the mandate under the Prison Rape Elimination Act of 2003 (PREA) to gather data on the incidence or prevalence of sexual assault in juvenile facilities. The first year of data collection visited 200 juvenile facilities, with over 10,000 completed interviews with youth. BJS released the first report from the 2008-09 NSYC survey in January 2010. Sampled youth ranged in age from 10 to 25 and included males and females.

Survey content	
Section A	Background (e.g., reason for admission, education, race/ethnicity, orientation)
Section B	Facility perceptions (e.g., perceptions of staff, environment safety)
Section C	Sexual activity within facility (e.g., with other youth, with staff, coercion)
Section D	Detail on sexual assault by other youth (e.g., type of coercion, location and time of assault, reports of incidents)
Section E	Detail on sexual assault by staff (e.g., type of coercion, location and time of assault, reports of incidents)

The questionnaire, which is broken down into the 5 section described above, is administered to all respondents using ACASI (Audio Computer Assisted Self Interview) technology. Respondents wear headsets to listen to questions as they appear on the laptop screen and enter their answers using a touch-screen. This technology:

- Provides a special level of privacy for the respondent. The interviewer will not know which questions are asked or how respondents answer the questions.
- Accommodates respondents with limited literacy skills. Respondents both see the questions and answers displayed on the screen and hear them through their headsets. The voice from the computer guides them through the answer categories.
- Permits the use of complex branching and skip patterns that are programmed directly into the instrument. This allows us to tailor the question flow based on respondent age and answers to particular questions, thereby helping to eliminate exposure to language that is not age-appropriate.