

Measurement of Race and Ethnicity in BJS Corrections Statistics: Report to OMB in Response to Terms of Clearance of the National Corrections Reporting Program (NCRP) (Control Number 1121-0065)

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This report is submitted in response to OMB's request for an update on BJS' efforts to bring the National Corrections Reporting Program (NCRP) race questions into OMB compliance. In the terms of clearance for the NCRP OMB requested a report documenting BJS progress in addressing differences in the collection of race and ethnicity across corrections collections. With respect to the NCRP, in particular, we adopted the categories of "two or more races" and "additional categories in your information system," which brings the NCRP in line with other corrections collections.

Background

In the Terms of Clearance for the NCRP, OMB requested a report from BJS that discussed its progress in addressing differences in the collection of race and ethnicity data across corrections collections, and OMB referenced the "Q&A document" that BJS prepared in response to OMB passback questions on the NCRP. Question four in the passback asked BJS to describe how it is addressing the differences in collections. OMB wrote:

Please see below for a brief summary of the different collections mentioned in this clearance package for which OMB has issued terms of clearance related to reporting of race and ethnicity. We are struck by the differences across collections particularly given the concern that some are from the same respondents. We would like BJS to provide a summary of how it is addressing this set of terms of clearance related to the prison collections overall.

The collections referenced in OMB's question include:

- National Prisoner Statistics (OMB control #: 1121-0078)
- Deaths in Custody Reporting Program (OMB control #: 1121-0249)
- Capital Punishment, Inmates under Sentence of Death (OMB control #: 1121-0030)
- Annual Parole Survey, Annual Probation Survey, Annual Probation Survey-Short Form (OMB control #: 1121-0064)
- National Corrections Reporting Program (OMB control #: 1121-0065)

OMB's concerns were that across the surveys, BJS used both the one-question and two-question format for obtaining race and ethnicity (RE) data. The two-question format first asks about Hispanic/Latino ethnicity and then requests respondents to identify their racial categorization; combination of the two questions is performed later when the data are being analyzed, with Hispanic ethnicity trumping all racial categories. The single question format stipulates 'non-Hispanic/Latino' for each of the racial categories, and includes a separate 'Hispanic/Latino' category. In the response to the clearance application for NCRP, OMB indicated that some of the BJS surveys RE questions included response

options that were not compliant with OMB guidelines. Of particular concern to OMB was that the NCRP included both an “other” and an “unknown” race category.

This report describes (1) how BJS has addressed the use of one/two question formats for obtaining RE data; (2) how BJS has addressed the prior use of “other” and “unknown;” (3) BJS’ preference for continued use of the “Additional categories in your information system” category; and (4) the results from analyses of several BJS corrections collections that address issues of consistency in reporting RE data and emphasize the major challenges faced by BJS in working with data providers who rely on administrative records systems to respond to BJS requests for its corrections collections.

Use of the One/Two Question Format, Use of “other” and “unknown” and Use of “Additional categories in your information system”

BJS continues to use both the one- and two-question formats to obtain RE data, but BJS’ use of these formats is generally associated with the type of data corrections data collection. With the establishment surveys — the National Prisoners Statistics (NPS) and the Annual Parole/Probation/Probation-short form (APS)—BJS uses the one-question format, as this eliminates the need for respondents to provide separate counts of offenders by ethnicity and then by race.

Since OMB presented the NCRP passback questions, OMB has approved the NPS and APS for collection. The NPS was approved on July 20, 2011, and the APS was approved on August 19, 2011. Both use the one-question format and the OMB approved response categories, as shown below:

NPS race/ethnicity question:

6. On December 31 2011 how many inmates under your jurisdiction were —
(See insert for race/ethnicity definitions.)

	Male	Female
a. White (not of Hispanic origin)		
b. Black or African American (not of Hispanic origin)		
c. Hispanic or Latino		
d. American Indian/Alaska Native (not of Hispanic origin.)		
e. Asian (not of Hispanic origin.)		
f. Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander (not of Hispanic origin.)		
g. Two or more races (not of Hispanic origin.)		
h. Additional categories in your information system — Specify		
i. Not known		
j. TOTAL (Sum of items 6a to 6i should equal item 2d)		

APS race/ethnicity question: (both the parole and probation surveys use the same format)

10. On December 31, 2011, how many adult parolees in your jurisdiction were —
(See insert for race/ethnicity definitions)

a. White (not of Hispanic origin)	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Black or African American (not of Hispanic origin)	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Hispanic or Latino	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. American Indian/Alaska Native (not of Hispanic origin)	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Asian (not of Hispanic origin)	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander (not of Hispanic origin)	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. Two or more races (not of Hispanic origin)	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. Additional categories in your information system — Specify	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. Not known	<input type="checkbox"/>
j. Total (Sum of items 10a through 10i should equal item 4)	<input type="checkbox"/>

In addition, the materials mailed to data respondents for both the NPS and APS include an insert that provides respondents with information about OMB’s standards for reporting race and ethnicity. We adopted this convention as a method to provide respondents with more information about how to report RE data.

We retain the use of the “Additional categories in your information system” for collection purposes to reduce burden on respondents of having to review individual responses and reclassify them. We also think that retaining this response category reduces measurement error associated with reclassifying the additional categories into OMB categories. As we reported previously to OMB (in our September 2009 response to the NCRP passback questions), we have analyzed data from the “additional categories” response and found: (a) that less than 1% of the prison population nationwide falls into this category; and (b) the myriad of responses across states would add enormous complexity to the administration of the establishment surveys. We would have to develop guidance for the states on each response and take steps to ensure that each system recoded these responses in a consistent manner. By retaining the “additional categories” responses directly from our providers, we are to apply a consistent of rules to reclassify them into OMB categories. BJS established this practice with OMB several years ago in recognition of the fact that state and local data providers’ information systems contain response options for RE that include “other,” and “unknown”; once these fields are populated by administrative or facility

staff, the states' data managers cannot easily make changes to the information. This clearance application round, we agreed to omit the "other" category from the instruments.

For the NCRP and Capital Punishment collections, both of which are comprised of individual- or offender-level data provided primarily by creating data extracts from administrative systems, BJS uses the two-question format to eliminate the need for respondents to rewrite the data extraction programs they have used for years to produce the data to meet the BJS request.

At the time of clearance of NCRP, OMB raised concerns about the use of an "other" and an "unknown" race category. These response options have been removed and replaced with the "additional categories in your information system" and "not known." Additionally, we include the response option "Two or more races." This brings the NCRP format in line with the formats used in NPS and the APS collections. In addition, we modified the wording of the "Black" response category so that it reads "Black or African American," and to the Hispanic origin question, we modified the response categories to read "Hispanic or Latino" and "Non-Hispanic or non-Latino" to comport with the NPS and APS surveys.

For Capital Punishment (cleared by OMB on 10/25/2010), we also use the two-question format, as shown below:

Capital punishment ethnicity/race questions:

4a. Ethnicity – Mark (X) appropriate box.

- 1 Hispanic or Latino 2 Non-Hispanic or Non-Latino 3 Not known

4b. Race – Mark one or more.

- 1 White 5 Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
2 Black or African American 6 Additional racial category in your information system – *Specify* ↘
3 American Indian or Alaska Native
4 Asian _____

For the Deaths in Custody Reporting Program (DCRP), we use a single-question format. This departs from the general principle of using a two-question format for collections of individual-level data; this decision was made because the DCRP data generally are not compiled from the same administrative data systems used to provide data for the other BJS corrections collections. The DCRP requests information pertaining to the cause of and circumstances surrounding the death, and are usually based on a medical examiner's or autopsy report rather than being completed by drawing extracts from existing information systems.

In sum, across corrections collections that are drawn largely or partially from corrections information systems, we implemented reporting formats that are consistent with OMB guidelines on race and ethnicity but that also retain response options that reflect the existing information systems. The "Not known" and "Additional racial categories in your information system" response options address the fact that states vary in how they record data on race and ethnicity, that states may not follow OMB guidelines in recording RE data, and that the respondents who provide data to BJS are not the same people who enter RE data into states' information systems. By giving respondents the option to provide detailed data on the additional race categories, BJS can do the work of reclassifying these categories into OMB categories for reporting, which results in greater consistency overall.

Results from BJS Analysis of Reporting Race and Ethnicity Statistics from Corrections Collections

To assess whether the BJS' approach to capturing data on race and ethnicity of offenders has an impact on reporting statistics on race and ethnicity according to OMB guidelines, we completed several empirical analyses of the corrections data to determine if the formats used resulted in differences in RE distributions of offenders.

BJS' corrections collections are voluntary surveys (with one exception) and data on race and ethnicity of offenders are typically provided by respondents in departments of corrections by using their respective administrative databases to complete BJS' survey forms or data call requests. The core collections assessed for this report were:

- National Corrections Reporting Program (NCRP) (OMB control number 1121-0065)
- National Prisoner Statistics (NPS-1B) (OMB control number 1121-0102)
- Deaths in Custody Reporting Program (DCRP) (OMB control number 1121-0249)
- Capital Punishment (Persons under sentence of death) (NPS-8) (OMB control number 1121-0030)
- National Inmate Survey (NIS) (OMB control number 1121-0311)

The prior section of this report discussed all but the NIS survey. The NIS is a sample survey that BJS conducts as part of its work under the Prison Rape Elimination Act. NIS data are self-report via ACASI mode of administration in which respondents answer separate questions about race and ethnicity per OMB guidelines.

To assess differences in reporting race and ethnicity across the corrections collections, we undertook three sets of analyses:

- (1) We compared estimates of the total number of prisoners by race and ethnicity from the NPS to totals obtained from the NCRP. Our objective was to determine whether the official aggregate counts of prisoners (NPS) as reported by state departments of corrections differed from those obtained from their submission of individual records (NCRP).
- (2) We linked NCRP data to the DCRP and Capital Punishment data and compared the race and ethnicity distributions among the matched and unmatched datasets. In both analyses, the data came from the DOC administrative records systems.
- (3) To assess how closely statistics on race and ethnicity of prisoners as recorded in state administrative records systems correspond with statistics generated from inmate surveys in which prisoners self-report race and ethnicity, we compared estimates derived from NCRP with those obtained from the NIS. The key issue in this third comparison was how closely the estimates from administrative records systems' compare with prisoners' self-identification of race.

In general, the results of our analyses show:

- The collection of race and ethnicity across corrections establishment surveys and administrative records collections show consistency in reporting race and ethnic distributions of offenders. Differences between NCRP and NPS are minimal for most states over a 10-year period, and of the 17,667 inmate deaths from that could be matched to NCRP records, the reported

race/ethnicity matched between the two collections for 99% of the non-Hispanic Whites and Blacks, and 94% of the Hispanic decedents.

- There are differences in reported distributions of race and ethnicity between BJS' corrections establishment surveys and administrative records collections, and BJS' inmate surveys in which individuals self-report race and ethnicity. NCRP showed higher percentages of non-Hispanic Whites and Blacks (4% and 5%, respectively) than reported in NIS, and 2% fewer Hispanic inmates. These discrepancies are predominantly due to the mode of data collection of the race/ethnicity variables (administrative records versus self-report survey). However, NCRP respondents are instructed to include inmates in prison hospitals, halfway houses, and other non-confinement facilities, and NIS does not sample from these locations, which may account for some of the racial differences observed.

We continue to work with providers of establishment survey and administrative records collections to obtain data on race and ethnicity that are consistent with OMB standards.

Race and Ethnicity in the NCRP and NPS

Data on individual inmates in the NCRP cannot be linked to NPS aggregate counts, but both NPS and NCRP report on comparable populations of prisoners. In 2009, all 50 states responded to the NPS-1B year-end data collection, which asks state departments of corrections to enumerate inmates by race. Fewer states submitted data to NCRP in 2009; 33 states provided at least one portion of the NCRP individual records on inmates (prisoner admissions, prisoner releases, parole releases, end-year prisoner census) from which race/ethnicity could be used. For the 33 states that provided both NCRP and NPS data, Table 1 shows the percent of non-Hispanic Whites, Blacks, and others, and Hispanics for the 2009 NPS and 2009 NCRP by state, as well as the difference in percent between the two datasets. Positive values in the difference column indicate a higher percentage of that racial/ethnic group in the NPS; negative values denote a higher percentage for that race/ethnicity in the NCRP for that state.

Table 1. Percent classification of race/ethnicity by state in the National Prisoner Statistics (NPS) and the National Corrections Reporting Program (NCRP), and difference between the two surveys, 2009^{1,2}

State	Race/Ethnicity Classification														
	White, non-Hispanic			Black, non-Hispanic			Hispanic			2+ races			Other		
	NPS%	NCRP%	Δ %	NPS%	NCRP%	Δ %	NPS%	NCRP%	Δ %	NPS%	NCRP%	Δ %	NPS%	NCRP%	Δ %
Alabama	40.2	43.4	-3.2	59.7	56.5	3.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Alaska	48.1	50.9	-2.8	10.4	7.6	2.8	2.4	2.4	0.0	0.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Arkansas	51.0	56.6	-5.7	45.6	39.8	5.7	2.9	0.7	2.2	0.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.3	-2.3
California	25.7	27.1	-1.4	29.0	28.0	1.0	39.6	39.5	0.1	0.00	0.0	0.0	3.8	0.0	3.8
Colorado	43.9	44.0	-0.1	19.7	19.3	0.4	32.5	33.0	-0.5	0.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Connecticut	31.1	30.5	0.6	42.2	42.5	-0.3	26.2	26.4	-0.2	0.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Florida	46.5	40.4	6.1	49.5	48.4	1.1	3.6	10.5	-6.9	0.00	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.6	-0.3
Georgia	33.7	34.3	-0.6	62.6	61.8	0.8	0.0	3.5	-3.5	0.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Hawaii	22.5	23.0	-0.5	4.6	3.9	0.7	3.2	2.9	0.3	0.00	0.0	0.0	2.7	0.1	2.6
Iowa	65.4	66.3	-0.8	25.2	25.0	0.2	6.6	6.0	0.6	0.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Kentucky	69.9	71.2	-1.3	28.1	26.5	1.6	1.3	1.1	0.2	0.47	0.0	0.5	0.0	1.0	-1.0
Louisiana	30.0	31.8	-1.7	69.6	68.0	1.6	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Maryland	24.8	24.8	0.0	74.5	74.2	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Minnesota	46.6	48.4	-1.8	35.4	34.2	1.2	7.1	6.8	0.4	0.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Missouri	57.5	60.2	-2.8	40.2	37.3	2.9	1.7	1.9	-0.2	0.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Nebraska	55.6	55.5	0.1	26.4	25.8	0.6	12.4	12.9	-0.6	0.00	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.4
Nevada	46.2	46.3	-0.1	28.6	28.0	0.6	20.2	20.5	-0.4	0.29	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.2	-0.2
New York	21.9	22.5	-0.6	51.0	51.8	-0.8	25.0	23.6	1.4	0.00	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.6	-0.1
North Carolina	35.8	37.0	-1.2	55.9	55.3	0.6	5.7	5.3	0.4	0.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3	-0.3
North Dakota	64.7	64.9	-0.2	6.6	6.0	0.6	5.6	5.4	0.2	0.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3	-0.3
Ohio	49.3	51.7	-2.4	47.7	45.5	2.2	2.4	2.3	0.1	0.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3	-0.3
Oklahoma	53.0	51.2	1.8	30.9	29.1	1.8	6.7	6.7	0.0	0.00	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.2	0.0
Oregon	73.2	73.8	-0.5	9.7	9.6	0.2	13.1	13.0	0.1	0.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Pennsylvania	38.8	39.6	-0.8	49.5	48.4	1.1	11.0	11.3	-0.3	0.00	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.3
Rhode Island	47.7	47.5	0.2	28.9	30.1	-1.2	21.0	20.5	0.5	0.00	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.3	0.1
South Carolina	32.4	33.3	-0.9	65.3	64.0	1.3	1.5	1.9	-0.3	0.00	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.5	0.0
South Dakota	61.4	56.0	5.4	6.1	6.3	-0.1	3.2	3.6	-0.4	0.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Tennessee	49.4	51.8	-2.4	48.1	46.0	2.2	2.1	1.9	0.2	0.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Texas	31.1	31.6	-0.5	36.6	36.4	0.2	31.9	31.5	0.3	0.00	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.2	0.0
Utah	65.4	67.3	-1.9	7.1	6.6	0.5	19.4	22.2	-2.7	0.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Virginia	35.5	37.2	-1.7	62.0	60.4	1.6	2.1	2.1	0.0	0.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Washington	63.6	65.2	-1.6	19.3	18.0	1.3	8.9	8.6	0.3	0.46	0.0	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0
West Virginia	85.5	65.5	19.9	13.1	10.6	2.6	0.6	0.0	0.6	0.58	0.0	0.6	0.0	23.7	-23.7

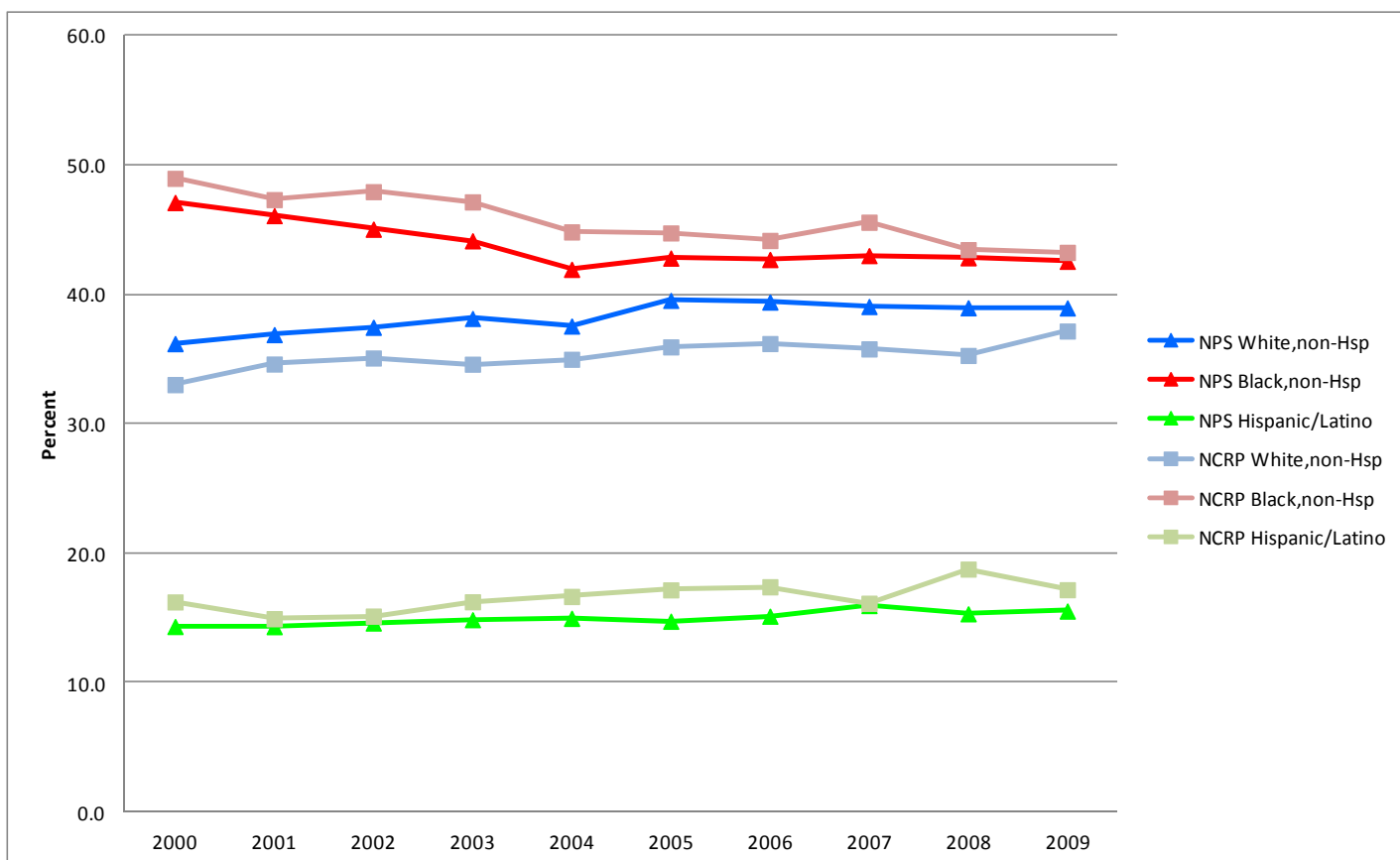
¹Total percents will not sum to 100% per state since the NPS and NCRP distributions of Native American/Alaska Native, Asian, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander are not shown in this table.

²Because only one state (West Virginia) provided data for “two or more races” this table shows “other race” as a summary category. We continue to work with NCRP respondents to encourage them to adopt the OMB classification.

West Virginia has the greatest discrepancy between racial/ethnic groups as categorized in the NPS and NCRP. This discrepancy arose from the fact that 19.9% of inmates classified by NPS, but not NCRP as White, non-Hispanic, is accounted for in the “Other Race” category in NCRP.

Figure 1 shows the percent distribution of non-Hispanic Whites, Blacks, and Hispanic inmates as measured by NPS and NCRP between 2000 and 2009. All 50 states participated in NPS data collection for each of these years, while the number of states submitting administrative records on their yearend stock population to NCRP ranged from 18 to 29 during this time period. Despite the reduced coverage of prison inmate race/ethnicity data, the distribution of NCRP replicates the direction and magnitude of the NPS data, showing a general decline in the percent of non-Hispanic Blacks in state prison, and a slight increase in the percent of non-Hispanic White inmates. Differences between the two collections for each race may possibly be due to the fact that NCRP retains the two-variable race/Hispanic ethnicity question sequence, while NPS began collecting Hispanic ethnicity as a stand-alone category in the combined race/ethnicity question in 2000. Since NCRP and NPS data are often drawn from the same state datasets by the same respondents, some error may have been introduced by the differences in data collection between the two surveys.

Figure 1. Percent classification of race/ethnicity in National Prisoner Statistics (NPS) and National Corrections Reporting Program (NCRP), 2000-2009



In the 2009 NPS collection, seven states were able to distinguish inmates with two or more races in their reported data: Indiana, Kentucky, Maine, Montana, Nevada, West Virginia, and Washington. Four of these states (Kentucky, Nevada, West Virginia, and Washington) provided data to NCRP in 2009 and 2010, but to date, only West Virginia has provide NCRP for the “two or races” response category. In the rest of this report, prisoners classified by West Virginia as “two or more races” or “additional categories not in your information system” have been combined into a single category.

Race and Ethnicity in DCRP and NCRP

The DCRP data consist of individual records of decedents in state prisons. These individual records contain details on cause of and circumstances surrounding deaths in state prisons (the value added by DCRP). The DCRP data also contain identifying information such as name, date of birth, date of admission into prison, and fact of death. These variables are available in the NCRP also. We matched DCRP and NCRP records to determine whether we would obtain similar distributions of race and ethnicity of prisoners on the matched records.

After testing several combinations of last name, dates of birth, death, and admission to prison, we found that matches between DCRP and NCRP had the highest success rate using the date of birth and release from prison (date of death). For the nine year period common to both data collections (2001-2009), the overall match rate was 61.2%, or 17,513 deaths. We also obtained an additional 154 matched decedent records from deaths in local jails. As state prisons routinely send prisoners to jails due to overcrowding, we wanted to find as many NCRP records of deaths in the DCRP as possible.

In the DCRP, we use the one-question OMB standard classification of race, including a multiracial category in 2009. Table 2 shows that the race/ethnicity combinations reported in these two separate BJS prison collections in 2009 match more than 95% of the time among non-Hispanic Whites, non-Hispanic Blacks, and Hispanics. Two inmates classified in the DCRP as having multiracial background could be matched with records in the NCRP in 2009; in the NCRP, one was classified as “Hispanic”, and the other as “Other race”.

Table 2. Percent consistency of race/ethnicity classification from matched records in the National Corrections Reporting Program (NCRP) and the Deaths in Custody Reporting Program (DCRP), 2009¹

		Race/Ethnicity classification in NCRP, 2009			
		White, non-Hispanic	Black, non-Hispanic	Hispanic	Other ²
Race/Ethnicity classification in DCRP, 2009	TOTAL records matched, 2009	912	724	246	3
		%	%	%	%
	White, non-Hispanic	98.7	0.4	2.4	0.0
	Black, non-Hispanic	0.3	98.9	0.8	0.0
	Hispanic	0.4	0.3	95.1	66.7
	American Indian/Alaska Native	0.0	0.1	0.4	0.0
	Asian	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Multiracial	0.0	0.0	0.4	33.3
Not known	0.5	0.3	0.8	0.0	

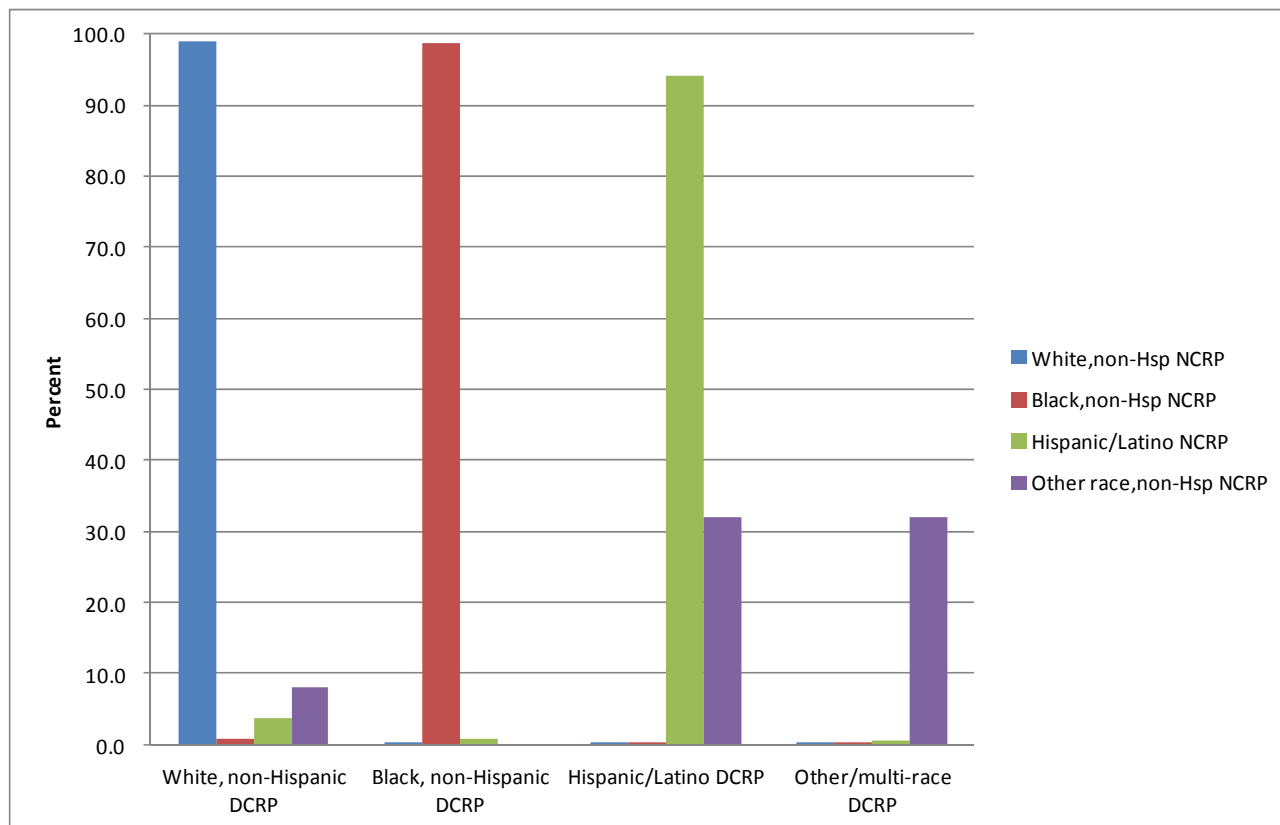
¹Total percents will not sum to 100% per state since the NCRP distribution of Native American/Alaska Native, Asian, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander are not shown as separate categories in this table, nor have they been combined with the “Other” category prisoners.

²Because only one state (West Virginia) provided data for “two or more races” this table shows “other race” as a summary category. We continue to work with NCRP respondents to encourage them to adopt the OMB classification.

Prior to 2009, DCRP did not collect the multiracial category; making it directly comparable to NCRP in terms of racial categorization. When we compared the collections over the entire nine year period that BJS has collected mortality data from state prisons and prison inmates housed in local jails, NCRP

records matched to records in DCRP continue to agree in more than 75% of the cases in all race/ethnic combinations except the “other race” category, as seen in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Percent of matches between the National Corrections Reporting Program (NCRP)¹ state prison inmates' racial/ethnic values with values from the Deaths in Custody Reporting Program (DCRP), 2001-2009



¹Because only one state (West Virginia) provided data to NCRP for “two or more races” this table shows “other race” as a summary category. We continue to work with NCRP respondents to encourage them to adopt the OMB classification.

Race and Ethnicity in Capital Punishment (CP) and NCRP

Like NCRP, BJS’ capital punishment collection contains individual-level records of state prison inmates under sentence of death. We attempted to match records from the 2009 NCRP data to that year’s database of state inmates under sentence of death using the first four letters of the inmate’s last name, the first three letters of the inmate’s first name, the state of imprisonment, the inmate’s sex, and month and year of birth. Of the 3,765 inmates serving death sentences according to the 2009 CP survey of states, 1,831 (48.1%) were identified in NCRP as serving a death sentence, or executed in the past year. There were 1,545 inmates in the CP dataset for 2009 who did not appear in NCRP as either serving a sentence of death or executed during 2009 (41.0% of all inmates in CP); of these, 1,216 (78.7%) were incarcerated in states from which BJS received 2009 NCRP data.

Table 3 demonstrates a high percent of agreement between the race/ethnicity classification in matched records of NCRP and CP.

Table 3. Percent consistency of race/ethnicity classification from matched records in the National Corrections Reporting Program (NCRP) and the Survey of Inmates Sentenced to Capital Punishment (CP), 2009¹

		Race/Ethnicity classification in NCRP, 2009			
		White, non-Hispanic	Black, non-Hispanic	Hispanic	Other ²
Race/Ethnicity classification in CP, 2009	TOTAL records matched, 2009	786	780	271	3
		%	%	%	%
	White, non-Hispanic	97.6	1.1	1.1	33.3
	Black, non-Hispanic	0.3	98.2	0.4	0.0
	Hispanic	1.7	0.5	98.5	66.7
	American Indian/Alaska Native	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Asian	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0
Additional categories not in your information system	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	

¹Total percents will not sum to 100% per state since the NCRP distribution of Native American/Alaska Native, Asian, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander are not shown in this table.

²Because only one state (West Virginia) provided data for “two or more races” this table shows “other race” as a summary category. We continue to work with NCRP respondents to encourage them to adopt the OMB classification.

Of those inmates in the CP dataset and those in NCRP coded as being under a sentence of death, the racial/ethnic distributions within the unmatched groups are similar in both samples, suggesting that there is little evidence of a racial/ethnic bias in the matching procedure (Table 4). When the CP inmates unmatched to NCRP are limited to only those states submitting NCRP data in 2009, there is a slight increase in the percentage of Black, non-Hispanic inmates which causes a corresponding decrease in White, non-Hispanics.

Table 4. Percent consistency of race/ethnicity classification from unmatched records from the National Corrections Reporting Program (NCRP) and the Survey of Inmates Sentenced to Capital Punishment (CP), 2009

		Unmatched record characteristics		
		Inmates in 2009 NCRP only	Inmates in 2009 CP only	Inmates in 2009 CP only, but from states submitting 2009 NCRP data
Race/Ethnicity classification, 2009	TOTAL unmatched records, 2009	389	1,545	1,216
		%	%	%
	White, non-Hispanic	48.6	47.9	44.9
	Black, non-Hispanic	41.1	43.4	47.1
	Hispanic	7.7	7.4	6.7
	American Indian/Alaska Native	0.8	0.9	0.8
	Asian	0.3	0.3	0.3
	Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.0	0.1	0.1
	Other ¹	0.0	0.1	0.1
	Additional categories not in your information system	0.0	0.1	0.1
Missing	1.5	0.0	0.0	

¹Because only one state (West Virginia) provided data for “two or more races” this table shows “other race” as a summary category. We continue to work with NCRP respondents to encourage them to adopt the OMB classification.

Race and Ethnicity in the National Inmate Survey (NIS) and NCRP

In this exercise, we compare estimates of the race and ethnic distributions of prisoners derived from the NCRP to estimates of the race and ethnic distribution of prisoners derived from self-report surveys of prisoners. We view the self-report data on race as the “gold standard,” given the issues associated with recording and reporting race and ethnicity from states correctional information systems.

We use the National Inmate Survey (NIS) for comparative purposes. The NIS is a self-report survey of prison inmates selected to achieve a representative sample of state prisoners. The complex sampling scheme includes selection of facilities based on size and sex ratio, and selection of inmates within these facilities based on several factors related to the expected response rate, level of precision, and expected prevalence rate for sexual victimization. BJS weights the NIS responses to reflect national-level estimates of the characteristics of state prisoners, including distributions of age, sex, race, and ethnicity. The NIS follows OMB standards for race and ethnicity and uses an ACASI mode to obtain these data. As a self-report survey, the NIS does not include the “additional categories in your information system” response.

For this comparison, we used the NCRP “D” records, which are records of persons in prison at yearend, for 2008 and compared them to the 2008 NIS data. The NCRP-D records provide a cross-section estimate of the prison population that is comparable to the cross-section of prisoners in NIS. Not all states reported NCRP-D records in 2008, but the prison population in the 24 that reported NCRP-D records cover two-thirds of the state prison population in 2008.

The method of obtaining self-report data on race and ethnicity in NIS differs from the NCRP in which the state officials who record data on the race and ethnicity of prisoners may not obtain self-report data and in which they generally do not use response categories that conform completely with OMB's categories. The comparison of NIS estimates of the percent of prisoners falling into various race and ethnic categories with NCRP estimates gives a measure of the potential bias in the NCRP administrative records on these measures. Table 5 shows the distributions; figure 3 shows differences in race between the two surveys stratified by sex.

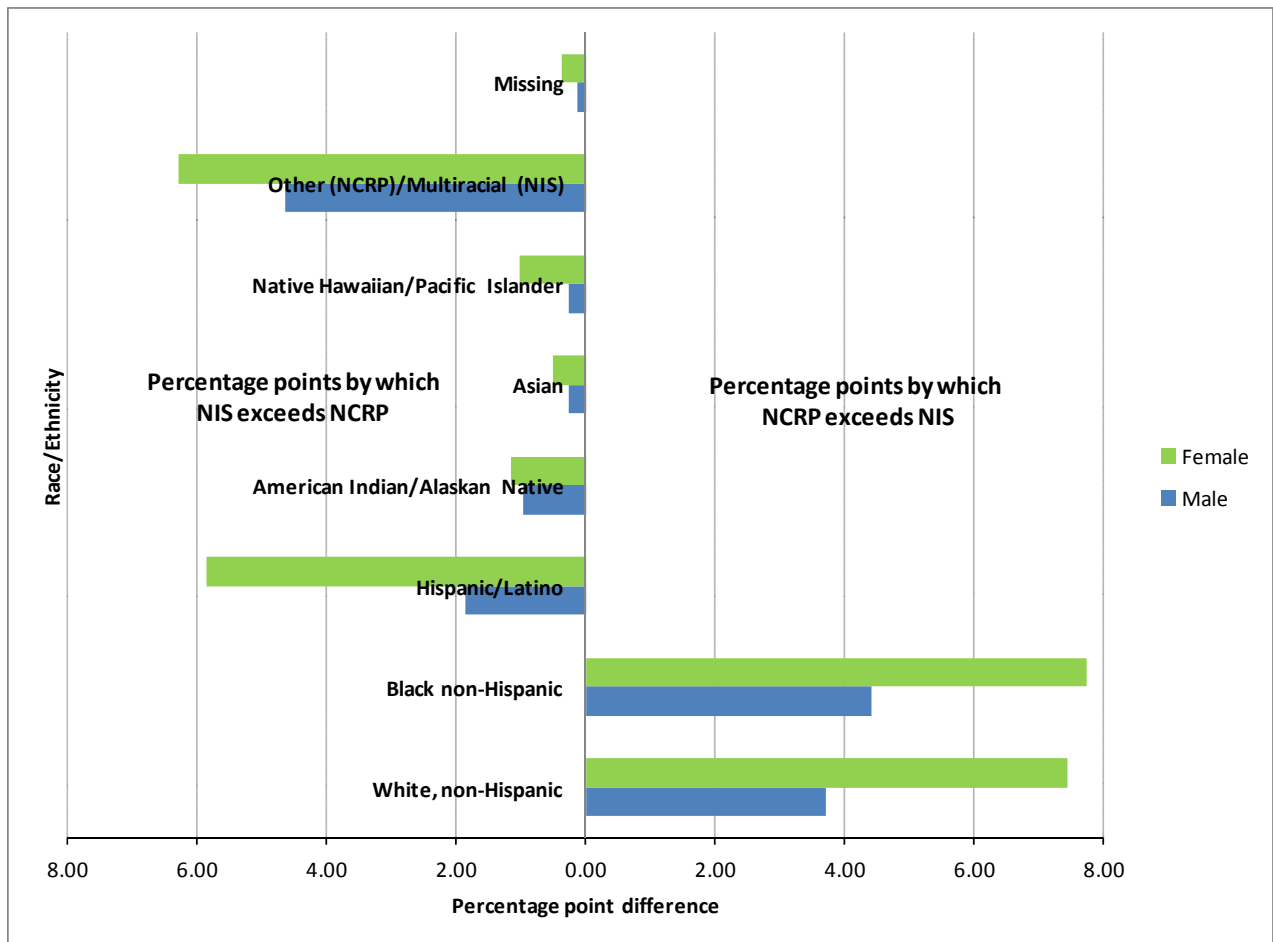
Table 5. Percent consistency of race/ethnicity classification in the National Corrections Reporting Program (NCRP) and the National Inmate Survey (NIS), 2008

Race/ethnicity classification	NCRP stock population, 2008	NIS, 2008
	%	%
White, non-Hispanic	35.3	31.3
Black, non-Hispanic	43.4	38.8
Hispanic	18.8	20.9
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.9	1.9
Asian	0.4	0.7
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.0	0.4
Other ¹	0.2	0.0
Multiracial (chose two or more races)	0.0	4.9
Missing	0.9	1.1
TOTAL	100.0	100.0

¹Because only one state (West Virginia) provided data for "two or more races" this table shows "other race" as a summary category. We continue to work with NCRP respondents to encourage them to adopt the OMB classification.

According to table 5, NIS shows 38.8% of prison inmates surveyed in 2008 self-identified as non-Hispanic Blacks, followed by non-Hispanic Whites at 31.3%. The 2008 NCRP stock prison population has higher percentages for non-Hispanic Blacks, and non-Hispanic Whites (43.4% and 35.3%) than the NIS (31.3% and 38.8%, respectively). While some of the differences can be explained as an underreporting of Hispanics in NCRP (18.8% vs. 20.9% in NIS), many of these inmates are clearly choosing to self-identify as multiracial when given the opportunity in NIS (as almost 5% of inmates in NIS self-identify as belonging to two or more races). This disparity is of greater magnitude in females than in males for all racial/ethnic groups (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Percentage point differences between 2008 National Inmate Survey (NIS) and 2008 National Corrections Reporting Program (NCRP)¹ stock prison population for race/ethnicity, by sex



¹Because only one state (West Virginia) provided data for “two or more races” this table shows “other race” as a summary category. We continue to work with NCRP respondents to encourage them to adopt the OMB classification.

The underreporting of Hispanic ethnicity and multiracial category in NCRP compared to NIS appears to be related to the self-report nature of the inmate survey. In the NIS, each inmate must select ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ for each of the racial and ethnic categories. Forcing a selection for each RE category rather than allowing for one check mark to cover the entire RE classification may result in a higher percentage of inmates self-identifying as two or more races. Conversely, we do not have a complete understanding of exactly how each state department of correction collects race and ethnicity data, but we know that the processes vary. Some departments of corrections use an intake form in which they ask prisoners about their race and ethnicity; others use data from intake records from the local jail and/or court; others may “impute” race, in that the person completing the inmate’s intake assessment may select a race or ethnic category for an individual rather than ask; additionally, few states (based on the findings from NPS) follow OMB’s guidance strictly.

A portion of the differences may also be attributable to coverage differences, in that NIS did not sample from certain types of facilities that are covered by NCRP data, such as halfway houses, prison hospitals, and prison work details. On the other hand, NIS sampled from private prison facilities, but these are not

fully covered by NCRP. Since private facilities tend to hold inmates sentenced for less violent offenses, this could contribute to the disparity in the racial distribution. To the extent that the race and ethnicity of inmates is correlated with location in these types of facilities, coverage differences could explain some of the discrepancy. However, we suspect that this is not the case and that the major reason for the discrepancy lies in the method for obtaining data on race and ethnicity.

That said, the magnitude of the differences between the NCRP and NIS estimates of non-Hispanic Whites, non-Hispanic Blacks, and Hispanics fall within about 10% of each other but the underreporting of persons of two or more races in NCRP is a problem.

Conclusions and Future Efforts to Improve Collection of Race and Ethnicity Data

Our analyses of the NCRP data show that the racial/ethnic distribution of state prison inmates is comparable with the other administrative data and establishment surveys conducted by BJS (the NPS, Capital Punishment, and DCRP). Our analyses also show that there are differences between the racial/ethnic distribution of NCRP and NIS, mostly due to the NIS' ability to collect race/ethnicity data directly from the inmate as opposed to the administrative records of the NCRP. We recognize that a limitation of our administrative surveys is the ability of information systems to provide data on persons of two or more races.

We are committed to continue to work with our NCRP respondents and other data providers on reporting of race; while we have had limited success in our attempts to collect responses for persons of two or more races in the NPS, we feel that BJS has made some progress in introducing the issue to our data providers. We will continue to respond to questions from data providers about OMB guidelines for race and ethnicity, and assist them in making changes to their data extraction programs or provide recommendations for changes to their information systems that comport with OMB guidelines. BJS is preparing our OMB clearance package for the 2012 iteration of the Survey of Prison Inmates. We will propose to study the convergence of inmates' self-report responses for race/ethnicity with their matched NCRP administrative records to further clarify the role reporting method plays in skewing the race/ethnicity distribution in prison populations. The DCRP survey forms currently collect race/ethnicity using the OMB 1-question format, and we will propose to study the additional burden that a 2-question format. The state prison respondents are able to provide data in the 2-question format, since they already do this for NCRP, but the switch might place undue burden on jail respondents.

At the same time, we want to reiterate to OMB that BJS operates in a challenging data collection environment. Many of our respondents are not the persons who designed, operate, and/or manage the information systems they use to generate reports or respond to our data requests, nor are they the persons who design intake forms or entered intake data into the information system. Most of our respondents are located within the research rather than the operations units of corrections departments, and they are viewed internally as ancillary users of data designed primarily for operational purposes; therefore they are not necessarily in a position within the organization to exert a large amount of influence over the design of these databases. The databases were not created with research or data extraction to meet an external requestor's definitions in mind. As indicated in our cover letters to states requesting data, responses to our collections are voluntary, and we rely on the good will of state departments of corrections (DOCs) to provide data to NCRP and our other collections derived from their information systems. So while BJS can request changes in a state's method of reporting race, we

have to do so cautiously so as not to harm response rates and data quality. Even attempting to work through our data providers to implement changes in how state departments of corrections collect data on race and ethnicity poses challenges. Asking our respondents to take on intra-organizational matters—such as changing a department’s database to measure race in a manner that is consistent with OMB’s definitions—would ask them to take on challenges that could ultimately threaten their continued participation in the voluntary efforts to provide NCRP data. However, as we learn that respondents are updating their information systems, we will encourage them to adopt OMB’s guidelines for race and ethnicity.