

B. Collection of Information Employing Statistical Methods

1. Universe and Respondent Selection

The potential National Corrections Reporting Program (NCRP) universe is all movements and year-end population status of all persons in custody in the 50 states' prison systems and all movements of all persons under post-custody community supervision (PCCS; formerly known as parole) in the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Movements of federal adults in custody are excluded from the NCRP because BJS obtains these data directly from the Federal Bureau of Prisons (FBOP) in its Federal Justice Statistics Program (FJSP). FJSP is a collection of administrative records from federal criminal justice agencies that BJS uses to track federal criminal case processing. Persons sentenced to prison in the District of Columbia Superior Court enter federal prison, and their movements are tracked by the FBOP.

The NCRP universe is defined by cohorts, specifically –

- persons admitted into state prisons during a year,
- persons released from state prisons during a year,
- persons held in state prisons at year-end,
- persons entering PCCS in the 50 states during a year,
- persons discharged from PCCS in the 50 states during a year.

The NCRP collects administrative records on each prisoner movement (or year-end status) through state departments of corrections. There are 56 total possible respondents in the NCRP data collection universe. These include the department of corrections (DOC) in each of the 50 states, 5 separate contacts for PCCS data in five states (Alabama, Georgia, Massachusetts, Nevada, and South Carolina) where the DOC does not keep data on persons on PCCS, and the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency for the District of Columbia, which tracks PCCS data for Washington, DC. For data year 2022, 45 states provided data on prison admissions, 47 states provided data on prison releases, 46 provided information on the year-end stock prison population, 35 provided records on entries to PCCS, and 34 provided records on exits from PCCS. These numbers are expected to increase as states are encouraged to provide more NCRP record types (see item B.3., “Methods to Maximize Response,” below).

BJS does not sample states for inclusion in NCRP. Rather, BJS tries to obtain data from all states due to wide variation in the laws, sentencing practices, and demographics of the states. Failure to capture states with smaller prison populations will only enhance the effects of the large states when the offense, time served, admission and release type distributions are presented at a national level. By collecting data from each state, BJS can track individual jurisdictional changes in sentencing practices and answer requests from Congress, state legislators, and researchers.

2. Procedures for Information Collection

Prior to respondent outreach each year, BJS and the data collection agent update all materials and review the protocol for the upcoming collection (**Appendix F**). At the beginning of each year,

states are contacted by BJS's data collection agent with an email to confirm that the data respondent has not changed over the past year and to tell them to expect a packet of materials describing the submission of NCRP data in the next few weeks (**Appendix G**). In 2025, the packet for collection of the 2024 NCRP data will contain an introductory letter from BJS (**Appendix H**), instructions for data submission (**Appendix A**), and an NCRP Frequently Asked Questions fact sheet (**Appendix I**).

The introductory letters are unique to each state depending on any special requests or relevant submission information identified during previous data collections. For example, the letter may reference the prior submission data and ask if they can submit any sooner, or ask a respondent if they are able to submit a cohort or variables they had previously been unable to provide.

Currently, 35 states routinely report post custody community supervision (PCCS) data each year. BJS hopes to recruit five additional states to submit PCCS data in the next three years. In tailored email communication during the collection introduction, the data collection agent will ask about any cohorts not submitted in the past. Given updates within DOCs, BJS will encourage participation in submitting PCCS and provide any guidance or coding assistance where applicable.

The NCRP data collection agent, currently Abt Global (Abt), will ask states to upload data files in any convenient file format. The files will be uploaded by state data providers to a secure Confirmit upload site customized for NCRP via a provided link. Uploaded files are automatically downloaded to a secure server operated by Abt. This secure file upload site was first implemented in April 2024. The site is compliant with Federal Information Processing Standard (FIPS) 140-3 and meets all the requirements of the Federal Information Security Modernization Act (FISMA) and the Privacy Act.

All respondents currently provide data in electronic format and no manual submissions are expected in the future. States are contacted during January for data from the previous calendar year and asked to submit their NCRP data by March 31. BJS and its data collection agent work with states through email, as seen in **Appendix F**, to develop a schedule for data submission that meets the states' individual needs. If data are not available by the requested submission date, Abt follows-up with nonrespondents and tailors email communication based on their specific situation. In general, BJS "closes" data collection at the end of September, after states with larger prison populations, like Texas and California, have had time to prepare and submit their data.

After data submission, Abt reviews the data for completeness. If there are questions about the data files after review, the Abt analyst responsible for the state will send an email to the respondent addressing the specific concerns with the submitted data (**Appendix J**). Each of these correspondences are personalized to the specific requests.

After processing by the data collection agent, BJS receives the final files in late December. BJS archives the NCRP files at the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) once a year, but if states submit NCRP data after the files have been archived, they are updated in the following year's submission.

3. Methods to Maximize Response

BJS's data collection agent will continue to make the annual request for NCRP data as clear and concise as possible and accept data in any format so that states do not need to process the data to meet specific BJS submission standards. BJS and its collection agent contact data providers solely for the purposes of submission follow-up and clarification and are careful to not place undue burden on respondents. Examples of the follow-up contact from data reporting year 2022 can be found in **Appendix J**.

Since the previous OMB clearance for NCRP, BJS and its data collection agent have had success in continuing to engage states to participate in NCRP. All fifty states provided at least one type of NCRP record in six years between 2011-2018, with 47 states providing at least one type of record from 2019-2022¹. Some states submit after the traditional data collection period and can lag 1-2 years behind in their submission of annual data. Multiple states have also submitted previous years' data to extend back their contributions.

A few reasons for gaps in responding include staff turnover and data system changes. During the history of this collection, there are some years that a state will refuse to participate until they are able to dedicate more staff to compiling the data or building programs in a new data management system. Each state has an assigned staff member with our data collection agent that they will work with for any questions or concerns through the year. During this time, the data collection agent will reach out to states who have yet to provide PCCS data and see if there has been any progress in their ability to report or if there is a different agency responsible for that data who needs to be contacted.

Item response rates are very high for the states who can respond (**Appendix K**). For key items such as offense, sex, race, date of admission, date of release, and some identifiers such as first name, last name, and date of birth the item response rate is over 95% with over 90% of submitted states including these items in their file submission. Items with the lowest response rates include prior military service and last military discharge date and type.

BJS directly engages with the corrections data providers and researchers about issues that are germane to understanding prison population change. In conjunction with the National Institute of Corrections' (NIC) Institutional Corrections Research Network (ICRN), in April 2024, BJS and NIC held a data providers and corrections researchers' workshop in Aurora, Colorado. The meeting was attended by 27 representatives from 25 states. This was the seventh such meeting sponsored by BJS since 2014 and has proven to be very popular with the state data providers to share best practices on data collection and information systems, as well as get DOC administrators to use the statistics they develop in policy discussions. BJS started hosting these meetings over 10 years ago to foster relationships with the respondents and encourage continued participation in the NCRP data collection. These meetings have the bonus of accelerating submission of the NCRP data in the months and weeks leading up to the events.

¹ Arizona, Michigan, and New Jersey did not provide data 2019-2022.

At the 2024 meeting, BJS presented plans for NCRP, demonstrated the newer data analysis tool, and had an information session about NCRP for new state data providers. Attendees from several states gave presentations about how they use their data to address policy research questions in their states, including: conditions of confinement on recidivism as well as other recidivism topics; research in corrections practices including engaging corrections practitioners in research through innovation and experimentation; and a variety of other topics discussed in breakout sessions over a day and a half.

Additionally, in 2022, BJS and NIJ hosted a series of webinars to give a platform to data providers to discuss impacts of the pandemic on policy and procedures as well as other topics suggested by providers in lieu of an in person meeting due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Topics of these webinars included behavior and mental health, COVID-19, victimization, and protection of vulnerable populations in prisons, and risk assessment in state prisons. The webinars were established to increase response and encourage engagement throughout the year. They were a good way to stay connected to the respondents during a time that we were unable to have in-person meetings.

During the upcoming collection cycle, BJS will work to return to all 50-state participation in the NCRP. BJS has been in contact with all 50 states, even those who are unable to respond. As states update their systems and programs to produce these files again, BJS offers definitions of requested items and offers technical assistance where possible. BJS will also work with individual jurisdictions to improve data quality, including the new [Statistical Policy Directive 15](#) race and ethnicity standards, as well as working on a project to review and reclassify offense codes from each state into a standardized BJS format. The crosswalks between the states' offenses and BJS codes are updated each year when new laws are passed, but older laws and those that have been modified require review to ensure they are still converted to the correct BJS offense category.

The NCRP data are not used for national-level statistics at BJS; therefore, no weighting, imputation, or estimation is done for unit or item non-response to the collection. When producing statistics with the NCRP, BJS clarifies how many and which states are included in the analysis. The individual-level data collected with the NCRP allows for unique analysis of prison trends over time, as well as merging with other datasets for more in-depth analysis of specific research questions that cannot be answered with aggregate data collections.

4. Final Testing of Procedures

The burden will remain about the same as the previously OMB approved 2023 collection. Race and ethnicity data collection guidelines have been updated to reflect the 2024 Statistical Policy Directive 15 (SPD15) revisions (see **Attachment A**) but BJS does not anticipate any increase on burden. BJS will continue to accept the race and ethnicity categories respondents are collecting. BJS is working with our criminal justice partners to assist in their compliance with SPD15 by the OMB deadline.

5. Contacts for Statistical Aspects and Data Collection

The Prisons Corrections Statistics Unit at BJS is responsible for the overall design and management of the activities related to the NCRP collection including data collection; data elements, definitions, and counting rules; and data analysis and dissemination.

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