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2018 National Inmate Survey (NIS-4): Recommendations for Updating the NIS Prison Frame

Technical Plan

Prepared for

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The target population for the prison portion of the National Inmate Survey (NIS) is the inmate population housed in a state or federal confinement facilities. The NIS makes inference at the facility level. Therefore, the frame must fully enumerate all confinement facilities. The frame used to define the sampling population and for the selection of prisons in first three iterations of the NIS – NIS-1 in 2007, NIS-2 in 2008-09 and NIS-3 in 2011-12 was the 2005 Census of State and Federal Correctional Facilities. For sample selection and data collection the following attributes for each facility are needed:

- Facility name
- Facility address
- Confinement status
- Gender housed
- Operator
- Indicator for whether facility's primary function is to offer mental health services
- Adult male inmate population count
- Adult female inmate population count
- Juvenile inmate population count

Prior to the NIS-2 and NIS-3, the 2005 Census was updated through web reviews of DOC websites to identify facilities that have closed since the 2005 Census or opened. However, no updates were made to the population measures which were used as the size measures for the PPS first-stage selection

In 2012, BJS conducted a partial Census of State and Federal Correctional Facilities for use in the Survey of Prison Inmates (SPI). The Census was partial in that it did not collect the full array of information obtained in the 2005 Census. Rather the 2005 Census only collected the critical information necessary for the SPI sample selection; namely, (1) facility name, (2) facility address, (3) facility operator, (4) total male population, (5) total female population, and (6) whether the facility's primary function was mental health services. For the NIS, the 2012 Census does not have information on the juvenile population in each facility.

The SPI was conducted in 2016 from a sample of 385 prisons. Among the facilities in the sample, information on facility closure, population changes (e.g., identified as housing male inmates but housing female inmates) was documented.

1.2 Frame Options

The following existing data files are available for use to develop the frame for the NIS-4.

1. **2005 Census of State and Federal Correctional Facilities (2005 Census)**. This is the only data source that contains all the complete necessary information for the NIS sample
2. **2012 Census of State and Federal Correctional Facilities (2012 Census)**. This data source has updated universe information relative to the 2005 Census, but only contains total population counts

3. **2012 Census augmented with SPI sample information.** This data source identifies closed facilities and those with incorrect population characteristics in the 2012 frame, but only contains this information for the facilities selected for SPI.
4. **2012 Census augmented by BJS.** In addition to information obtained during the SPI, BJS reviewed the 2012 frame and updated it further. However, this data source does not contain population information and the updated information was obtained in 2016.

1.3 Memo Purpose

This memo will provide BJS with the following:

1. A recommendation for which data source should be used as a starting point for defining the universe of facilities and prison inmates for the NIS-4
2. Recommendations for how the data source should be augmented or updated prior to selection the NIS-4 sample

2. Frame Source Recommendation and Suggested Methods for Update

2.1 Frame Source Recommendation

Upon review of the available frame sources, it is recommended that the 2012 Census of State and Federal Correctional Facilities be used as the basis for the NIS-4 Frame. While other sources such as the 2012 Census augmented by the SPI sample and the 2012 Census augmented by BJS have more current information, both are incomplete because not all facilities have updated information and the information that has been updated will be a minimum of 2 years old when the NIS-4 is conducted. Therefore, because updates will need to be made to either of the more recent facility listings, the 2012 Census is the best starting point for the NIS-4 frame because all information is consistently defined for all facilities.

2.2 Recommendations for Updating the Frame

The following steps are proposed to update the 2012 Census of State and Federal Prisons for use in NIS-4. These updates should be made as close to the fielding of the NIS-4 as possible.

1. **DOC website review.** During this step, the list of prisons in the 2012 Census will be cross referenced with the current list of facilities listed on the DOC website. For each state and BOP the following checks will be conducted:
 - a. *Check confinement prison status.* In this check, the facilities identified as confinement prisons will be confirmed to still be as such. Facilities with 100 or fewer inmates that are identified as a confinement facility will be scrutinized more heavily. In general, confinement facilities hold more than 100 inmates. Therefore, the large number of facilities housing fewer than 100 inmates identified as confinement facilities needs to be verified. To the extent possible this check will determine if the website indicates if the facility is a confinement facility.
 - b. *Check facility status.* In this check, any facilities listed in the 2012 Census that are clearly closed will be removed and any facilities listed on the DOC website that are not listed on the 2012 Census will be added as potential new facilities.

- c. *Check gender status.* In this check, the gender flag (i.e., the gender of inmate housed 1=males only, 2=females only, 3=both genders) for a facility will be confirmed¹. If a DOC website indicates that the identified gender housed is not correct (e.g., facility indicated as housing males on the frame, but holds both genders on Census) the frame will be updated.
 - d. *Identify if primary function is mental health services.* Review DOC facility listing to determine if 2012 Census flag for primary mental health function is accurate.
 - e. *Adult population verification.* In this check, the adult population by sex will be verified against DOC website counts. When major discrepancies are identified, the facility will be flagged for follow-up during the Contact DOC step of the cleaning process.
 - f. *Juvenile population verification.* In this check, the number of juveniles in a facility will be identified. The 2012 Census does not split out the juvenile population. Therefore, this check will be used as an initial enumeration of the juvenile population. If the resulting population counts are not similar to the most recent NPS counts, the state will be flagged for additional follow-up during the Contact DOC step.
2. **Contact DOC.** During this step, DOCs will be contacted via telephone for some follow-up questions based on any remaining questions after the DOC website review. This call will serve two purposes: (1) for confirmation; echo back to DOCs what we believe correct based on the website review, and (2) for outstanding questions; resolve any issues that were not obtained during the DOC website review. The DOC telephone call will focus on the following:
- a. *Gender housed.* If the DOC website cannot clearly identify the gender housed in a facility, the gender housed will be confirmed.
 - b. *Mental health function.* If the primary function for a facility is not clear through the website review, the primary function will be confirmed.
 - c. *Confirm confinement prison status.* For prisons with less than 100 inmates which cannot have their facility type confirmed, we will confirm with DOC.
 - d. *Confirm facility status.* Based on the DOC web review, we will confirm with the DOC any facilities which we identified as being newly opened or closed.
 - e. *Confirm population.* For both the adult and juvenile population, any facilities which could not be updated will be confirmed with the DOC.

¹ For sampling a facility is identified as either a male facility or a female facility based on the composition of the inmate population. The assignment for NIS-4 is based on whichever sex comprises the majority of inmates housed (i.e., if 50% or more of the inmates housed are male than the facility is designated a male facility whereas if 50% or more of the inmates are female than the facility is designated a female facility). For prior iterations of the NIS, the sex of the facility was defined as female if all inmates housed at the facility were female and male if the populations housed was mixed or all male.