



# The National Inmate Survey (NIS)\*

RTI International has conducted research on crime, violence, justice systems, and behavioral health for over 30 years. Using rigorous multidisciplinary approaches, RTI research advances knowledge and informs policy, practice, and programs nationally and internationally.

## Overview

Although incidence rate estimates vary, it is known that each year a proportion of the incarcerated population is sexually assaulted. Incarcerated persons are under the care of federal, state, or local authorities and, as such, should be safe from victimization to the extent that prevention of such activities is possible. To prevent the sexual assault of inmates, additional information about the incidence, prevalence, and epidemiology of sexual assault in correctional facilities is needed. The Prison Rape Elimination Act (H.R. 1707) was passed by Congress in 2003 and charges the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) with conducting a number of research studies on sexual victimization in correctional institutions.

BJS first awarded RTI with the pilot study of the National Inmate Survey (NIS), which involved designing a methodology for collecting data from incarcerated persons about their experiences with sexual victimization within correctional facilities. The pilot study methodology included developing a touch-screen audio computer-assisted self-interviewing (ACASI) instrument to measure the prevalence and nature of sexual assault in correctional facilities. RTI's responsibilities also included sample selection, data collection, data processing, creation of weights, data analysis, and reporting.

BJS subsequently awarded the NIS National Study to RTI, for which RTI will collect data from inmates in a random sample of correctional facilities across the country on a recurring basis. All facilities will be selected with probability proportionate to the



number of inmates in the facility based on the 2005 Census of U.S. Prisons and the 2005 Census of U.S. Jails. Each year, the NIS National Study will produce national and facility-level estimates of the prevalence of sexual assault in confinement prisons and jails. These estimates will be shared with Congress and used to identify facilities that are in need of technical assistance.

## RTI's Crime, Violence, and Justice Research

In 2000, RTI established a dedicated Crime, Violence, and Justice Research Program, which has a research staff with professional backgrounds in criminology, economics, law, psychology, public health, and sociology. Crime, violence, and justice staff are located in RTI's main office in Research Triangle Park, NC, and in offices throughout the United States. RTI also maintains an office in Washington, DC.

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## The National Inmate Survey (NIS) *(continued)*

In addition to experienced crime and justice personnel, RTI has a highly qualified and varied research staff available for complex, cross-disciplinary projects. We draw on diverse professional expertise in substance use and abuse, physical and mental health, employment and training, housing, survey research, education, and research computing to build knowledge and inform policy and practice. Our fundamental investigative and program capabilities include

- Basic and applied research
- Program development and implementation
- Program evaluation
- Data collection
- Quantitative and qualitative analysis and reporting.

Our substantive work includes the following areas of concentration:

- Criminal and delinquent behavior
- Corrections
- Substance use
- Juvenile justice
- Violence
- Terrorism
- Prevention.

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