



State and Federal Corrections Information Systems

*An Inventory of Data Elements and
an Assessment of Reporting
Capabilities*

A joint project:

**Association of State Correctional Administrators
Corrections Program Office, OJP
Bureau of Justice Statistics
National Institute of Justice**



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Profiling and describing offenders

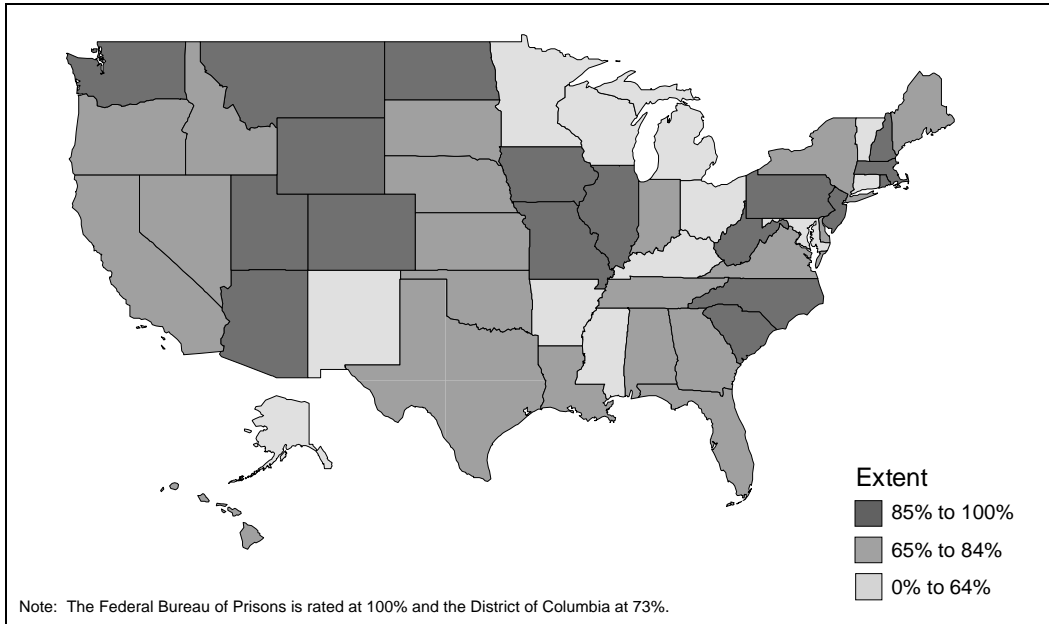


Figure 1. Extent to which departments maintain all demographic data electronically for most offenders

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Data elements described in chapter 1 — profiling and describing offenders

Dimension and data element

Demographic characteristics prior to commitment

Sex
Race
Hispanic origin
Religious affiliation
Date of birth
Age at commitment
Citizenship
If illegal alien
State of birth, if U.S. citizen
Country of birth
Address

Socio-economic status

Education level
If ever served in U.S. Armed Forces
Military branch(es) served
Length of military service
Type of last military discharge
Employment status prior to arrest
Length of employment
Length of unemployment
Occupation
Sources of income
Amount of income
Types of financial obligations
Amount of financial obligations

Family characteristics and living arrangements

Marital status
Number of children
Number of dependents
Relationship of persons living in household
Residential status (e.g., own, rent residence)

Chapter 1

Profiling and describing offenders

Highlights

- All 52 departments maintain data electronically on the race and sex of offenders entering prison; 51 do so for their date of birth.
- At least 40 departments collect data on the occupation, military discharge, marital status, and education level of offenders, but some of these maintain only paper records on this information.
- Twenty departments can not report on whether inmates have and support children.
- Data describing offenders' demographic characteristics are more commonly collected than data describing socio-economic status or family relationships.

The Inventory includes 29 data elements that can be used for describing and profiling offenders under correctional authority. This stage is comprised of three dimensions, each containing several elements that describe:

- Demographic characteristics such as age, race, sex (11 elements);
- Socio-economic status such as offenders employment, education, and related experiences prior to prison admission (13 elements); and
- Familial relationships (5 elements).

Demographic characteristics of offenders

In the profiling offenders stage of corrections processing, data elements that describe the demographic characteristics of offenders are collected in any format—paper or electronic—by more departments than are the elements that describe offenders' socio-economic status or familial relationships.

Most departments maintain data elements on demographic characteristics of offenders, such as their age, race, sex, Hispanic origin, and residence in high-availability form* (table 1.1). Specifically, of the 52 departments reporting, 51 meet this criterion for maintaining data on the sex and race of offenders; 50 do so for the date of birth of offenders. In addition, 39 departments have high-availability data elements describing Hispanic origin, while 40 meet it for data on State of birth and on country of birth.

*High-availability format is defined as maintaining data electronically for more than 75% of offenders.

Other demographic variables are less well represented according to this high-availability measure. Thirty-three departments collect data elements on citizenship at a high-availability level, and 31 departments do so on religious affiliation. Information on immigrant status (i.e., whether legal or illegal) is maintained in high-availability form by 18 departments, and 29 departments have high availability on offenders' residence (table 1.1).

Table 1.1. Number of departments with data elements that describe the demographic characteristics of offenders at admission

Data element	Question-naire item number	In electronic format for—			Have it in any format	Do not collect
		More than 75% of offenders	Less than 75% of offenders	In paper format		
Sex	1	51	1	0	52	0
Race	2	51	1	0	52	0
Hispanic origin	3	39	4	0	43	9
Religious affiliation	4	31	13	1	45	7
Date of birth	5	50	1	0	51	1
Age at commitment ^{a,b}	6	31	2	2	35	17
Citizenship ^{a,b}	7	33	6	3	42	10
If illegal alien ^b	8	18	5	7	30	22
State of birth, if U.S. citizen	9	40	6	1	47	5
Country of birth	10	40	3	1	44	8
Address	11	29	10	4	43	9

Note: Data elements with incomplete information are included in 'Have it in any format'. Totals of 'Have it in any format' and 'Do not collect' may not add up to 52 departments due to missing information about individual data elements.
^aSeveral departments can calculate this information from other data elements.
^bOne department records this information indirectly.

Socio-economic status of offenders

Relatively few departments maintain data elements for substantial segments of their population on aspects of military service, employment status, sources of income or financial obligations at commitment in a high-availability form (table 1.2). However, 29 departments maintain data in high availability form on education level and 23 do so for whether the offender served in the U.S. Armed Forces. For the most part, departments do not maintain data elements on income and financial obligations. For example, 17 departments do not collect employment data and 40 do not collect data on income of offenders at the time of commitment. Also, about three quarters of the departments do not collect data on the type or amount of financial obligations.

Table 1.2. Number of departments with data elements that describe socio-economic status of offenders prior to current commitment

Data element	Question-naire item number	In electronic format for—			Have it in any format	Do not collect
		More than 75% of offenders	Less than 75% of offenders	In paper format		
Education level	17	29	14	7	50	2
If ever served in U.S. Armed Forces	18	23	14	8	45	7
Military branch(es) served	19	16	10	10	36	16
Length of military service	20	8	5	10	23	29
Type of last military discharge	21	20	14	7	41	11
Employment status prior to arrest ^{a,b}	22	17	8	9	35	17
Length of employment	23	6	5	10	21	31
Length of unemployment	24	1	1	9	11	41
Occupation	25	16	15	9	40	12
Sources of income	27	1	3	8	12	40
Amount of income	28	1	1	9	11	41
Types of financial obligations	29	3	2	8	13	37
Amount of financial obligations	30	3	1	7	11	39

Note: Data elements with incomplete information are included in 'Have it in any format'. Totals of 'Have it in any format' and 'Do not collect' may not add up to 52 departments due to missing information about individual data elements.
^aSeveral departments collect employment information only for the last employment, or for up to a period of six months.
^bOne department can derive this information from other data elements.

Familial relationships of offenders

Many of the departments do not collect or maintain in high-availability form data elements on the family circumstances and living arrangements of offenders prior to admission (table 1.3). With the exception of the 35 departments that maintain data elements on marital status in high-availability form, no other data element about familial relations is maintained in a high-availability form by more than half of the reporting departments. Less than one-third of the departments have a high availability to provide data on children and dependents.

In general, data elements on family and domestic circumstances are not collected at all. Thirty departments do not collect data on the relationship of the offender to others in the household—although eleven departments collect such data in electronic form at varying levels of coverage of correctional populations. Similarly, most departments do not collect data that describes the residential status of offenders (e.g., whether they rent or own their residences, or are homeless).

Data element	Questionnaire item number	In electronic format for—			Have it in any format	Do not collect
		More than 75% of offenders	Less than 75% of offenders	In paper format		
Marital status	12	35	13	3	51	1
Number of children	13	14	6	12	32	20
Number of dependents	14	16	6	10	32	20
Relationship of persons living in household	15	7	4	11	22	30
Residential status (e.g., own, rent residence)	16	1	2	7	10	42

Note: Data elements with incomplete information are included in 'Have it in any format'. Totals of 'Have it in any format' and 'Do not collect' may not add up to 52 departments due to missing information about individual data elements.

Summary

Among the 29 data elements in the profiling offenders stage of corrections processing, the 11 that comprise the dimension of demographic characteristics of offenders have a higher concentration of elements maintained in common and high-availability form than do elements in the other dimensions—socio-economic status or family relations.

Data elements on race and sex are maintained by all departments, and by all departments but one on age and marital status. Data elements on education, employment, occupation, and military experience are maintained by a majority of departments. Data elements on residential status are maintained by very few departments. Each of the 29 elements in the offender profile category is collected by at least some of the departments, although some of these data elements are collected by only a few departments.