



Secondary analysis of data collected over a 20 year period by HM Inspectorate of Prisons



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BACKGROUND

For more than two decades, HM Inspectorate of Prisons for England and Wales (**HMIP**) has conducted detailed, confidential surveys of prisoners and other detainees as part of every full prison inspection it undertakes.

This has generated a unique **database** of historic survey data from almost 100,000 respondents, with more than 10 million analysable responses.

Following a successful **feasibility study** conducted by Royal Holloway University of London in collaboration with HMIP, which

included the exploration of detainees' expectations for the governance of this survey data, an infrastructure was put in place for a large-scale database to be prepared, analysed and made accessible.

PROJECT

This ESRC funded project seeks to develop a 20 year database of detainee surveys to:

Identify detainees' self-reported characteristics (e.g. age, ethnicity, gender) and experiences of imprisonment;

Understand how these self-reported experiences differ according to characteristics and circumstances, prison held in, and policy changes;

Use this knowledge to inform the work of practitioners and policy makers;

Prepare aspects of the database for use by other academic researchers, teachers and policy makers.

Trusted Relationships

“At the end of the day, nothing else that we can say will be as important as the general proposition that relations between staff and prisoners are at the heart of the whole prison system and that control and security flow from getting that relationship right”
(Home Office 1984: para. 16).

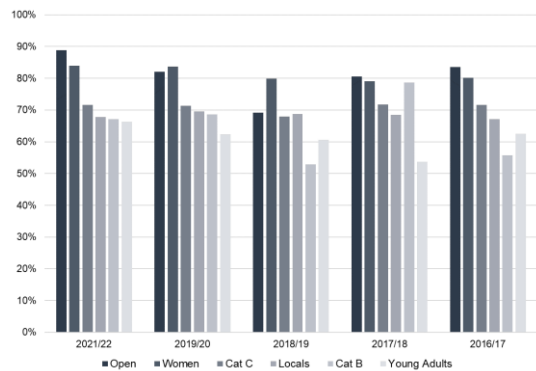
It is well known that staff-prisoner relationships are fundamental to prison life. At their best, staff-prisoner relationships are characterised as respectful, fair, trusting, and supportive.

The HMIP detainee survey asks prisoners directly about their experiences of staff-prisoner relationships rather than relying on management information. The survey captures various aspects of the dimension, including support, respect, feeling understood, and being treated as an individual as well as covers aspects of a less respectful culture by inquiring about intimidation, bullying, and feeling unsafe.

In the most recent 2021/22 survey, 73% of detainees said that they had a member of staff they could turn to for support and 71% felt that staff treated them with respect, which were both more positive for women (84% and 75%) than for men (71% and 70%).

Figure 1

Prisoner-staff relationships



Note. Are there any staff members you could turn to if you had a problem? Percentage 'yes' by functional type from 2016 to 2022.

However, variations can be found between prison functional types – in open and women prisons, 89% and 84% respectively said that they had a member of staff they could turn to for support, while this was only true for 68% to 72% of detainees in local and trainer prisons and even less so for young adult prisoners, with only 66% of respondents saying that they have a member of staff they could turn to.

Home Office (1984) *Managing the Long-Term Prison System: The Report of the Control Review Committee*. London: Home Office.



Trusted Criminal Justice System

“HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) generated new and unprecedented levels of accountability and transparency in the scrutiny of prisons in England and Wales”
(HM Chief Inspector Peter Clarke 2019).

It is widely acknowledged that research and policy should be informed by the people it most directly affects. However, what goes on in the rather closed world of prisons remains often largely unseen by the public.

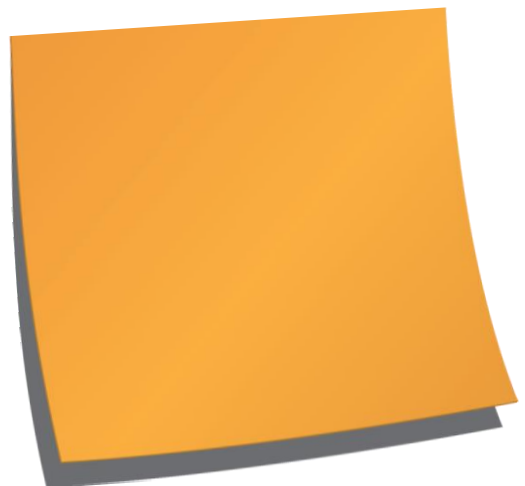
HMIP provides a view of the conditions in prison and the treatment of detainees as well as raises questions regarding future policy. Its detainee survey provides the opportunity to explore the individual lived experiences of people in the criminal justice system by capturing the voices of those who are currently serving time in prison.

Making features of the database available to other users will allow researchers and policy makers to incorporate lived experiences in research and the policy process and HMIP to work more collaboratively with external researchers and policy makers in utilising the data that is currently available to inform and drive change. Thereby facilitating greater impact, transparency, and trust.

Data that are analysed within this project will be deposited to the UK Data Service upon completion of the project (**JUNE 2023**). Depositing data with the UK Data Service ensures best practice in data protection whilst maximising the public benefit of research facilitated by access to this database.

Detainee survey data is classified as ‘safeguarded data’; this requires users to be registered with the UK Data Service, for depositors to grant permission and for data to be accessed for non-commercial purposes. The data is accompanied with documents that provide clear instructions on how to navigate the HMIP survey data.

Peter Clarke (2019) as cited in *Too much violence, drugs and inactivity in prisons but independent scrutiny having more impact* - Chief Inspector in 2018-19 report.



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