

Redesigning the National Crime Victimization Survey

Michael R. Rand
U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics
michael.rand@usdoj.gov

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Introduction

In 2008 the Bureau of Justice Statistics initiated a program to evaluate and redesign the methodology used to conduct the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS). This program was implemented both because the survey was undergoing a crisis related to the release of estimates for 2006, and in response to recommendations from a review of the survey by the National Research Council (NRC) of the National Academies.

The problems associated with the release of the 2006 NCVS estimates had both long term and short term causes. In response to flat funding over many years, the survey's sample had been reduced a number of times. These reductions, combined with declining crime rates experienced during the 1990's had, by 2003, impaired the survey's ability to meet its key objective of measuring a five percent year to year change in the violent crime rate. In 2006, the Census Bureau introduced a redesigned sample based on the 2000 decennial Census using a truncated procedure required by funding limitations at the same time the survey was transitioning from a primarily paper and pencil instrument to a fully automated computer assisted interviewing design. As a result, the year to year changes in victimization rates measured by the NCVS in 2006 was judged to be too extreme to have resulted from actual fluctuations in crime and were deemed to have been impacted by the methodological changes implemented during the year. (Rand and Catalano, 2007)

The current NCVS reevaluation and redesign program is, in 2009, still in its early stages. This paper discusses the program's goals and expected results, as well as the research projects currently underway or planned. The first sections of the paper provide a short review of the survey's history and current methodology.

Survey origins and design

Over the past three decades, the National Crime Victimization Survey has become the nation's primary source of information on the frequency, characteristics, and consequences of criminal victimization. Conducted by the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, the NCVS has been instrumental in helping to shape the national understanding of the nature and extent of crime.

The NCVS was implemented (as the National Crime Survey or NCS) in 1972 in response to a perceived need for more comprehensive information about the extent and nature of crime in the United States. In reaction to rising crime levels in our nation's cities, President Lyndon Johnson in 1965 convened the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice to examine the root causes and characteristics of crime in the United States and to recommend policies and programs to address what was seen to be a growing problem. The Commission found that the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting Program, (UCR) based on crimes reported to law enforcement agencies, and then the only program measuring the extent of crime in the nation, did not collect sufficient information to evaluate the extent and nature of the crime that was

occurring. The UCR obtained, (and still does so today,) information only on crimes reported to police, and obtained little information characteristics of crimes and crime victims or the impact of crime on victims.

To remedy this information void, the Commission developed pilot studies to explore the viability of using sample surveys to obtain data on crime, including that not reported to police. These initial experiments produced useful results, and the Commission recommended that a national victimization survey be implemented (President's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice, 1967).

The new survey program had three components; a national sample, a commercial survey, and a central cities component conducted in selected large cities across the nation. The primary objective of the new National Crime Survey Program was "to measure the annual change in crime incidents for a limited set of major crimes and to characterize some of the socio-economic aspects of both the reported events and their victims" (Kindermann, 1975.) The national household victimization survey produced estimates of threatened, attempted, and completed rape, assault, robbery, aggravated assault, simple assault, personal theft, burglary, property theft and motor vehicle theft committed against people age 12 and older and their households.

Although it underwent a redesign in 1992, the basic design of the survey has remained constant through its almost four decades of existence. As it has been since its inception, the NCVS is conducted for BJS by the U.S. Census Bureau. In 2008, interviews were completed with about 78,000 persons age 12 and older in about 42,000 housing units throughout the United States and the District of Columbia selected using a stratified, multi-stage cluster design. The sample excludes persons who are crews of vessels, in institutions, members of the armed forces living in military barracks, and the homeless.

Self-report interviews are conducted at six month intervals with all residents in sample households age 12 or older for a total of seven interviews over a 3 year period. If the residents of the sample address move out, interviews are conducted with whoever moves into the sample address.

The NCVS interview is conducted using two primary instruments: a crime screening questionnaire and an incident report. The screening questionnaire contains a number of questions designed to ascertain whether the respondent was a victim of a measured offense during the previous six months. One household member is asked questions about crimes against the household such as burglary and motor vehicle theft. For every incident uncovered by the screening questionnaire, an incident report form is filled. The incident form gathers information on a broad range of subjects such as the circumstances of the incident, the victim, the offender, and consequences of the victimization.

Within three years of the implementation of the NCS, the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA), BJS's predecessor's parent agency, contracted with the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) to evaluate the entire program. The resulting report, *Surveying Crime*, published in 1976, recommended a number of changes to the program:

- Eliminate the survey's commercial and central cities components
- Revise the crime screening questions to improve prompting respondents' memories
- Add questions to allow examination of ecological factors and lifestyle activities associated with crime victimization
- Add questions about crime preventive or protective measures taken by respondents (Penick and Owens, 1976)

Acting on these recommendations, BJS commenced a long term plan to redesign the survey. After an extensive research process, some revisions, deemed non-rate affecting, were implemented in 1986. Revisions to the survey's screening questions, because they would impact the amount and nature of the offenses measured by the survey were implemented in 1992. The revised crime screening questions were designed to better assist respondents in remembering events they had experienced by adding specific cues and prompts, targeting some offenses such as violence by intimates and rape, and varying the frames of reference (e.g. acts, locales and relationship to offenders). The redesign also added sexual assault other than rape as an offense measured by the survey. The new screen questions were implemented in half the survey's sample for 18 months beginning in January 1992. The remaining half sample was enumerated using the old methodology, thereby enabling an evaluation of the impact of the new screening questions.¹

The redesigned screening questions had a differential impact on each survey measured type of crime. For robbery, burglary, and motor vehicle theft, there was little or no difference between the estimates from the old and new methodologies. The rates of every other measured offense increased in the redesigned survey, and increases were greatest for difficult to measure offenses such as rape and domestic violence.

Because post-redesign estimates were obtained using a different screening process, they were considered to be not comparable to those of the earlier survey. The survey was renamed the National Crime Victimization Survey at about the time the redesign was implemented.

The improvements made during the 1992 redesign have enabled the survey to become the benchmark for victimization estimates in the United States. The improved screening protocols and other methodological changes implemented in the redesign addressed a number of problems that had been identified in the NCS and the questions added to the incident report expanded the information the survey could produce on the nature and consequences of crime victimization.

However, from its earliest days, the NCS/NCVS has had an uneven funding history. Even as BJS was planning the survey redesign, funding shortfalls required changes in a variety of survey protocols such as increased use of telephone interviewing. In 1992, while the

¹ For information about the 1992 NCVS redesign see Kindermann et al. (1997) and Rand et al. (1997), available on the BJS website at: <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/erve.pdf> and http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/cv73_95.pdf respectively.

redesigned survey was being introduced in half the survey's sample, further cost saving measures were taken; including a 10% sample reduction.

Funding issues, declining crime rates and impact on survey estimates

Since the 1992 redesign, budget shortfalls have required additional cutbacks to survey protocols and reductions in sample. The implementation of a new sample based on the 2000 decennial census was accomplished in 2006 a year late using a truncated procedure because of insufficient funding to accomplish it on schedule using the methods used in previous sample redesigns. The truncated implementation was one of the factors that caused the temporary break in series in 2006 and is discussed in more detail below.

Overall, since 1985 the survey's sample has been reduced 4 times. The number of interviewed households in 2008, 42,000, is about 3/5 the number interviewed during 1972, the NCS's first year (figure 1). The number of interviewed persons in 2005 was about 42% of the number interviewed in 1972. The greater decrease in the number of interviewed persons is the result of declines in household sizes and increases in the personal non-interview rate. (The sharp, temporary, decline in interviewed households and persons in 1992 reflects the half sample implementation to bridge the old and new designs.)

<Figure 1, NCVS Interviewed households and persons, 1973-2008 about here>

At the same time that funding shortfalls were requiring reductions in sample, the nation's victimization rates were declining. Between 1993 and 2003, the violent crime rate fell by 55% and the property crime rate decreased by 49%. While certainly good news for the nation, the lower victimization estimates, compounded by the sample cuts, greatly diminished the survey's ability to measure year to year changes in the violent crime rate; one of the NCVS's core objectives. To counter the declining precision, BJS began in 2003 to report short term changes in crime using two year average annual victimization estimates. For example, Criminal Victimization 2005, released by BJS in September 2006 provided comparisons of average annual rates for 2004-2005 to those of 2002-2003. (Catalano, 2006)

Issues associated with 2006 NCVS estimates

As discussed above, methodological changes implemented into the NCVS in 2006 caused changes in the survey estimates of crime that could not be attributed to actual changes in the amount of crime. The changes were:

- Introduction of a new sample based on the 2000 Decennial Census.
- A change in the way that data from households in the sample for the first time was used, and

- Replacing paper and pencil interviewing with computer assisted interviewing (CAPI).

The introduction of the new NCVS sample historically has occurred every decade subsequent to the decennial Census. However, the new sample introduction in 2006 was done in a truncated manner because funding was not available to implement the sample in the same way as in the past. For the three previous NCVS sample redesigns, the first interviews at the new households were not used to produce estimates, but were used, as was the procedure for all first time interviews, to “bound” subsequent interviews.

Bounding is a technique for anchoring events in time. The survey asks respondents to recall crimes that they have experienced during the 6 months prior to the interview. People often tend, however, to misremember when events occur, generally assigning them to the more recent past than they actually occurred. This “telescoping,” as it is called, can result in overestimates of crime if such crimes are measured as occurring during the survey’s reference period when they actually occurred prior to it. The bounding procedure was designed to eliminate the impact of such telescoping.

In 2006, however, BJS did not have the approximately \$2 million required to interview the large number of incoming households introduced by the sample redesign solely to bound future interviews as had been done in the past. To reduce the cost of introducing the sample design, an alternative procedure was developed. Adjustment factors based on a ratio of time in sample one crime rates to those of time in sample two through seven households based on 2005 data were created to eliminate the impact of the overestimates in victimization estimates resulting from including first time interviews. Analysis of this adjustment method for 2005 demonstrated a close fit to actual victimization rates for the year.

Under this truncated sample redesign plan, the new sample was introduced in January 2006. In July 2006, the survey was converted from a primarily paper and pencil survey to an automated computer assisted interviewing environment (CAPI)². This automation was necessitated because the Census Bureau was discontinuing support for the systems required to process the keyed survey data.

The unanticipated consequences of the methodological changes to the survey were that the overall violent crime rate in 2006 was about 16% higher than the previous year’s rate. Moreover, the increases were largely in rural areas, those areas most impacted by the introduction of the new sample. While the violent crime rate in urban areas increased by 4% and that in suburban areas increased by 5%, the rate in rural areas jumped by 62%. As a result, the estimates for 2006 were considered to be a break in the longitudinal NCVS series and not comparable to earlier estimates. (Rand and Catalano, 2007)

While the weighting adjustment was designed to counter the anticipated impact of using first time interviews in the production of estimates, funds were not available to

² For ease of reference, the acronym CAPI is used here to refer to all automated interviewing for the NCVS, which is conducted both in person and by telephone from interviewers’ homes.

implement the conversion to CAPI in a way that would enable estimating its impact on survey estimates.

The impact of the third methodological change, the sample redesign, was not anticipated. It had been expected that the implementation of the sample redesign would be largely non-rate affecting, meaning that the incoming sample was expected to resemble the outgoing sample sufficiently that there would not be a statistically significant difference in the measures of crime from the two samples.

Unfortunately, the changes were not implemented in a manner which facilitates identifying and quantifying the effects on the estimates. While an extensive review of the data by BJS and the Census Bureau could not isolate the factors causing the anomalous results, the review concluded that the likely causes were associated with the affects of new interviewers in areas in which the new sample was introduced. (Rand and Catalano, 2007)

This finding was supported by the 2007 survey estimates which say the measured crime rates returned to about the levels experienced in 2005. Further analyses of the data support this view. (Rand, 2008)

Other challenges facing the survey

In 2009 the NCVS faces a number of challenges in addition to the problems associated with survey funding and the 2006 estimates. One is the increasing difficulty of conducting interviews in the twenty first century, with the competing demands for time people face and a general decline in public willingness to participate in polls and surveys.

For the NCVS, the non-response rates highest for young non-white youth, the population subgroup with the highest victimization rate. Table 1 presents the 2005 person non-response rates by respondent age as well as by race and ethnicity for the 12-19 population subgroup.

<Table 1. NCVS Non-response rates, about here>

In recent years the survey has increasingly been asked to take on additional roles; to provide information for specific populations such as juveniles, the elderly and people with disabilities, as well as to provide information on an expanding number of topics, such as stalking and identity theft. While the increase in scope has strengthened support for it as a useful tool for measuring the extent and impact of crime, the added questions have increased the burden on respondents.

Decision to redesign the survey

The problems associated with the 2006 estimates arose because the survey's resources were no longer sufficient to both collect the data and maintain the precision of the survey's estimates and the quality of the data. BJS determined that to continue the NCVS in a climate of fiscal austerity required that it be reconstituted to reduce the per-case cost of collecting the data. Even before the issues with the 2006 estimates arose BJS was assessing the survey's future, inviting the National Research Council to evaluate its programs, with a particular focus on the NCVS. The charge to the NRC Panel to review the programs of the Bureau of Justice Statistics included the following: "A focus of the panel's work will be to consider alternative options for conducting the National Crime Victimization Survey, which is the largest BJS program." (National Research Council, 2008)

The panel's review of the NCVS, found that "As currently configured and funded, the NCVS is not achieving and cannot achieve legislatively mandated goal to 'collect and analyze data that will serve as a continuous and comparable national social indication of the prevalence, incidence, rates, extent, distribution, and attributes of crime ...' (42 U.S.C. 3732(c)(3))" (National Research Council, 2008). In all, the panel made 20 recommendations for evaluating and restoring the capabilities of the survey to achieve its mandated goals and improving its ability to measure the extent and nature of crime in the United States.

The panel's recommendations addressed every aspect of the survey's methodology as well as the support required to maintain a major statistical program. Its first recommendation was that "BJS must ensure that the nation has quality annual estimates of levels and changes in criminal victimization." Its second, was "Congress and the administration should ensure that BJS has a budget that is adequate to field a survey that satisfies the goal in [the first recommendation]."

Somewhat ironically, but to a large degree because of the problems with the 2006 NCVS estimates, funding support for the survey began to improve in 2007. BJS met with staff from the Office for Management and Budget to discuss how to restore the survey's ability to address its original objectives as well as to begin to remodel the survey to address new and emerging efforts. The renewed budgetary support from the Department of Justice, the Office of Management and Budget and the Congress grew from the realization that the survey, a valuable resource for assessing the extent of crime and its impact on victims, was in jeopardy and required restoration in order to maintain its viability.

Redesign Goals

While the initial goal of the redesign is to improve the cost efficiency of the NCVS in order to restore its ability to meet key goals and to maintain this ability for the foreseeable future, additional goals have been identified to strengthen stakeholder support

for the survey. Primary among these is the expressed need to produce subnational estimates of victimization.

Through 2007 and 2008, the goals for a redesigned NCVS continued to be discussed and developed. These goals are:

- Improve the precision and cost efficiency of the design to produce national-level estimates of the number of victimizations, victimization rates, and year-to-year changes in violent victimization rates.
- Enhance the flexibility of the design and operations to allow BJS to modify the program to study emerging issues.
- Modify the structure of the design to permit subnational (i.e. state, city or MSA) estimates of victimization.

BJS also has identified a number of data quality goals to be incorporated into the survey:

- Develop a program of ongoing methodological research to enable incorporating new procedures
- Reestablish quality control protocols that were diminished for budgetary reasons.
- Improve the “paradata” collected about survey administration.

Overall Research/Implementation Plan

BJS foresees the redesign of the NCVS to be a five year project encompassing methodological research and implementation of the redesigned survey with the redesigned survey implemented beginning in 2013. The time span for the project is dependent largely on obtaining the funding for the research and implementation activities. It is estimated that the research will cost between \$10 million and \$15 per year for fiscal years 2010 through 2012. Implementation costs are estimated at between \$20 and \$28 million through FY 2013. Financial support for the survey indicates that this program is attainable. FY 2009 funding for the survey rose from \$18 million to \$26 million. Support currently appears to exist for continued base survey funding at this level with an additional \$15 million per year to fund the redesign research. Depending on the scope of methodological changes made to the survey, it is possible that the implementation may encompass implementation of various aspects of the redesign over a number of years.

The framework or blueprint for the redesign is the 2008 NRC report. While the discussion and recommendations in the report speak to aspects of BJS’s program and process for redesigning the survey, the NRC panel did not attempt to identify exactly what structure the redesigned survey should take. The panel did identify a number of key goals that would be important for a future victimization survey to achieve. These goals included:

- Provide a national measure of crime independent of police measures.
- Provide contextual and etiological information about crime victimization.

- Enable addressing emerging crime problems.
- Provide detail for States and localities.
- Provide information beyond crime rates.
- Enable timely publication of estimates.
- Provide estimates for hard to measure crimes.

The panel also presented ten alternative survey designs that could address the various current and future objectives of the NCVS. The designs include features that address key survey goals. Importantly, none of the potential designs was capable of addressing all of the key goals listed above. Six of the potential designs would fulfill what can be expected to continue to be one of the survey's primary goals; providing a national measure of crime independent of police measures. These six designs, in addition to the current design, include core-supplement designs, a design modeled on the British Crime Survey, and designs with local area sample boosts.

Whichever design is ultimately selected for the redesigned victimization survey, a great deal of research is required in order to determine which design best meets the required goals of the survey at a sustainable funding level. However, the decision as to which design meets the most critical survey needs cannot be made until some key aspects of the current design are evaluated. These include:

- Sample design. Should the survey continue to utilize an address frame, or should it utilize a telephone or other frame? If an address frame, can it be stratified more efficiently to reduce sampling variance?
- Survey reference period. Among all the victimization surveys conducted across the globe, the NCVS is the only one that utilizes a 6 month reference period. Most utilize a one year reference period.
- Mode of interview. Currently about 30 percent of all NCVS interviews are conducted by personal visit. In order to reduce costs, it will be necessary to reduce or eliminate such interviews because of their expense. Alternatives include telephone interviews or modes of self administration such as mail or web based systems.
- Lack of capability to produce subnational estimates. Estimates for cities or states can be produced either by direct estimation or modeling.

In addition, the survey has some unique elements that require review to determine how they will be impacted by any future survey design. The redesign effort will include research to determine whether protocols in place can be improved. These elements include:

- The survey measures relatively rare events, requiring a large sample to enable measuring offenses against subpopulations.
- The survey focuses on the experiences of juveniles as well as adults. This will require review of informed-consent protocols to be used in the future.
- The survey's panel design, which has both positive and negative impacts on survey cost and estimates.

- Many of the topics covered by the survey are sensitive and protocols must be incorporated to protect respondents against both physical and emotional trauma.
- The survey must be designed to obtain information from a diverse population, including non-English speaking people in the United States.
- The survey requires respondents to remember details of events that may have occurred months prior to the interview.

Initial Research Projects

The initial research has focused primarily on improving the precision of the survey's estimates, the cost efficiency of the survey design, and the need to produce estimates for cities and/or states.

The first project, begun in 2007, anticipated an NRC panel recommendation to produce small area estimates. A contract was awarded to Westat to assess the feasibility of producing subnational, i.e. state or local, estimates from the NCVS. The specific goals of this study were to examine the expected utility of area specific victimization estimates from the NCVS; identify options for redesigning or augmenting the existing sampling protocols and data collection methods to produce such estimates; examine potential costs of each option and the complexities of implementation; and determine what future research should be done on the development and testing of one or more designs for changing the NCVS to obtain area specific estimates.

This project is not concentrating on a particular level of geography because the decision about whether the NCVS can produce state or city or MSA level estimates will depend on both the production costs as well as the level of detail desired. Westat is examining direct estimates as well as model based or indirect estimates for generating local area estimates.

In March 2008, BJS put out a solicitation for research projects in four areas: sample design, interview mode, reference period, and non-response bias. Each of the projects, in addition to completing research in the areas covered, includes a review of the relevant survey literature. A sixth project initiated in 2009, which will evaluate the survey's crime screening questionnaires, grew out of issues identified with the crime screening questions used to identify whether respondents had been victims of crime.

Each of these projects is discussed below:

Sample Design

The sample design project, like each of the four projects in the solicitation, addressed a recommendation of the CNSTAT panel. The goals of the sample design project are to evaluate what variables on the sampling frame could be used to reduce sample variance while maintaining a representative sample; determine what sample variables could be

used to reduce standard errors, and to evaluate over-sampling strategies which could be implemented to improve estimate precision.

The premise of this project, which was awarded to Westat, was primarily to determine how to reduce the variances associated with the current sample design. Reductions in these variances would improve the precision of the survey's estimates, even if no other changes were made to the survey, helping to mitigate the long term erosion of precision the survey has experienced.

Survey Mode

For the second study area, examination of data collection modes, two projects were initiated and awarded to Westat and RTI. The goal of these projects is to evaluate the use of less expensive modes of interview in order to reduce the cost per case for completing NCVS interviews. Currently, while all interviews are computer assisted, about 30% are completed in personal visit interviews, and the remainder are completed by telephone calls initiated from interviewers' homes. In person interviews are extremely expensive, because of the travel time and mileage costs incurred by interviewers. Telephone interviews are much less costly, but are still more expensive per case than some self administered modes. These projects are assessing whether such self administered survey modes could be viable for a complex survey such as the NCVS.

The primary mode being tested by Westat is interactive voice response (IVR.) RTI is examining the feasibility of web-based interviews. Both projects include CAPI/CATI control groups to enable comparison across interview mode treatments. In addition, both projects may also explore the impact of incentives on response rates. The primary research questions being addressed in these studies is the impact that self-administered modes have on response rates and the degree of difficulty that is required to get respondents to complete interviews using these modes for a survey asking about crimes the respondents have experienced.

Reference Period

The goal of the reference period research project is to examine the feasibility of using a 12 month rather than a 6 month reference period for the survey. Prior research has determined that longer survey reference periods are associated with increases in memory lapses associated with both remembering the occurrence of events as well as accurately recalling the details of events including when they actually occurred. This project, which was awarded to NORC, rather than attempting to replicate such studies is intended to develop mechanisms for improving respondent recall of victimization experiences over a 12 month period. In addition, the project also is exploring means for mitigating the increases in burden imposed by remembering events across a longer period, and developing a plan for expediting the publication of findings. In the current survey, the last interviews that obtain information about crimes occurring in a year take place in June of the year following; (June interviews ask about crimes occurring during the period December of the reference year through May of the following year.) With a 12 month

reference period, the last interviews are not completed until December of the year following the reference year, during which data are collected about crimes occurring from December of the reference year through November of the following year.

For the project, NORC is developing two forms of memory aids to assist respondents in recalling and accurately placing events in time: Enhanced Contextual Priming (ECP) and an Event History Calendar (EHC). The ECP portion will add contextual cues, prompts and additional introductory language to assist in recall. The EHC portion is a calendar that will be filled out prior to the crime screening questions to help respondents remember when events occurred.

Non-response bias

The goal of the Non-Response Bias study, awarded to NORC, is to conduct a variety of non-response bias analyses on the NCVS. The NCVS, like most household surveys in the U.S., suffers from declining response rates. In 1993, the household and person-level response rates were 93% and 91% respectively. By 2006, the rates had declined to 91% and 86% respectively. Analysis of possible non-response bias is important for the NCVS because the groups with the highest within unit nonresponse are also the groups with the highest victimization rates.

NORC will also develop recommendations for weighting adjustments or imputation procedures to mitigate the impact of survey nonresponse bias on survey estimates, as well as develop recommendations for oversampling some populations or developing protocols for strategic efforts to minimize non-response.

Screener research

An additional project was initiated in 2009 in response to perceived issues with the way the current screening questions are being asked by survey interviewers. The crime screening questions are the heart of the NCVS, as they determine the number, rates, and scope of the crimes measured by the survey. The questions used to identify crimes committed against the survey's respondents have been in use since the survey's first redesign in 1992. These questions were developed to provide a more complete and accurate accounting of the crimes in scope for the survey than did the survey's original questions.

Analyses of time stamps (available since the survey was automated in 2006) indicate that many interviewers are routinely not taking sufficient time to ask the full battery of questions. Lack of such data for paper and pencil interviews prohibits examining whether this issue has existed for the survey's history or is a new phenomenon. Regardless, if interviewers are either not asking the full battery of questions or truncating the questions they do ask, it is possible that respondents may not be prompted to relate all the crimes they have experienced during the survey's reference period.

The objective of this study is to undertake a comprehensive analysis of the current and pre-redesign crime screening questions to inform future questionnaire redesign efforts by providing a fuller understanding of how the survey's crime screening process has operated.

Other activities

An important part of BJS's research program is meeting with stakeholders to determine how information collected in a victimization survey can best serve their needs. In 2009, a meeting was held with representatives of Statistical Analysis Centers; state agencies that collect, analyze, and disseminate justice data. BJS is planning additional meetings in 2009 and 2010 with representatives from law enforcement agencies, federal agencies and the academic research community.

BJS has also met with representatives from the Federal Committee on Statistical Methods and staff from other federal agencies that conduct major household surveys to understand how they have redesigned surveys.

Next Steps

Because the goal is to restore the survey's ability to meet its mandated purposes and explore ways to augment its utility, activities are underway to explore enhancing the precision and quality of the data produced by the current survey. BJS is working with the Census Bureau to explore the feasibility of reintroducing sample that had been removed in previous years, to reintroduce and enhance some of the quality control measures that had been cut and to develop the survey's paradata about the data collection process.

In FY2010 BJS will extend the examination of subnational estimates, explore different sampling strategies as well as begin examination of the incident report questionnaire used to record the information about crimes uncovered by the survey's crime screening questions. The subnational study would evaluate whether the national sample could be boosted using a lower cost methodology to produce estimates for states or localities. One strategy being considered for testing this would be to conduct a truncated version of the NCVS in a set of localities (i.e. a shorter questionnaire, and a less expensive mode of interview,) and collect administrative data for the areas (such as UCR counts of crimes) and evaluate whether the data from the truncated survey in conjunction with the administrative data can predict the estimates from the full survey. The results from this study would help determine the feasibility of utilizing a multi-frame approach to product both national and subnational estimates of the extent, nature and consequences of crime victimization.

In following years, BJS will be working to finalize planning, testing and initial implantation of a new survey, including identifying the contractor for data collection and processing, designing the sample, re-authoring the instrument for CAPI, and pilot testing. The ultimate goal is to implement the redesigned survey in FY 2013 or FY 2014. It is not

clear yet whether the implementation will include a bridge between the old and new surveys.

Almost forty years ago, in 1972 the new National Crime Survey was a groundbreaking enterprise. Twenty years later the redesigned National Crime Victimization Survey was considered a state of the art victimization survey. It is BJS's intention that the current efforts will result in a survey with a methodology that restores it to a high level of esteem and respect; one that meets its mandated objectives and is sustainable for the decades that follow.

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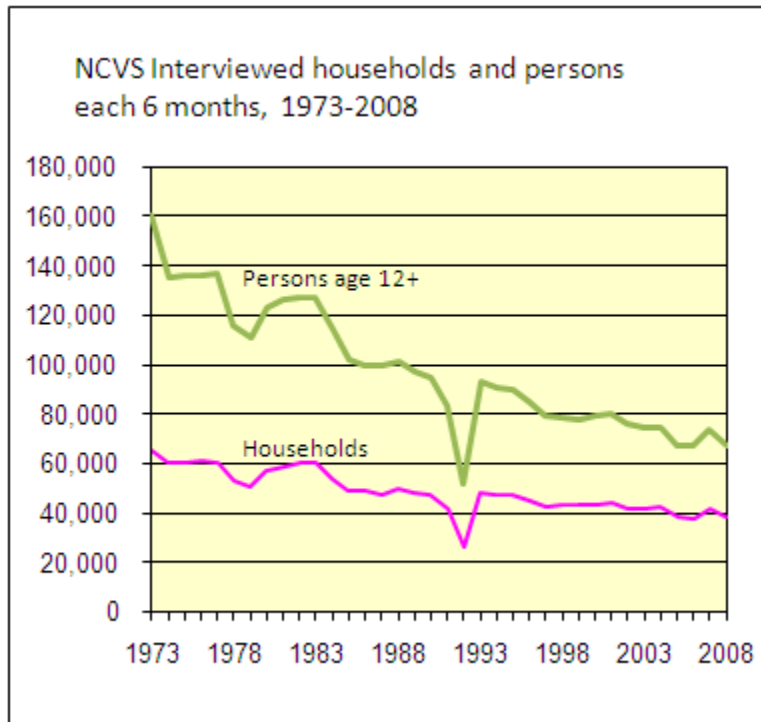


Figure 1

Table 1. NCVS nonresponse rates for selected demographic groups, 2005

Overall: 15.7%		Among 12-19 year olds	
12-15:	29.0%	White male:	31.3%
16-19:	32.4%	Black male:	38.6%
20-24:	22.0%	Other race male:	28.4%
25-34:	14.6%	Hispanic male:	26.8%
35-49:	14.2%	White female:	30.7%
50-64:	11.7%	Black female:	32.6%
65+	8.9%	Other race female:	28.1%
		Hispanic female:	24.6%