

B. Collection of Information Employing Statistical Methods

1. Potential Respondent Universe

The potential universe for the NCVS national sample is all persons 12 years of age or older in more than 120 million households and persons 12 or over living in group quarters situations (except crews of vessels, military in barracks, and the institutional population).

For the purposes of anticipated NCVS-RR, BJS will work with contractors to select samples in regions of the country that will minimize interviewing costs and are representative of as many different demographic groups as possible.

2. Procedures for Information Collection

Data collection procedures for the testing under this clearance will be varied, and will include cognitive interviews, computer-assisted personal interviews (CAPI), computer-assisted telephone interviews (CATI), audio-computer assisted interviews (ACSI), and Web-based surveys. Specific information about data collection procedures will be contained in the documentation provided to OMB when materials for each study are submitted for expedited review.

Title 42, United States Code, Section 3732 of the Justice Systems Improvement Act of 1979 (see attachment), authorizes BJS to collect and disseminate statistical data on all aspects of criminal justice occurring in the United States, including criminal victimization. The methods proposed for pretesting and developmental work are as follows:

- **Focus groups.** This is a qualitative method that uses a small group of individuals to discuss specific topics of interest to the research identified prior to the meeting. A protocol for the focus group is designed and used by a trained facilitator to help guide discussions. Focus groups are useful to explore new areas for surveys.
- **Cognitive interviews.** This method involves intensive, one-on-one interviews with respondents. Respondents are instructed to “think aloud” and describe what mental processes are functioning as he or she answers survey questions. Several different variations of cognitive interviewing can occur including asking respondents to paraphrase questions, asking follow-up probing questions to determine how the respondent decided on a particular answer, and asking the respondent’s opinion of what the researcher’s intent for a given question or response option. The objective is to identify ambiguous terminology or other confusing wording construction that

present respondents with comprehension problems. This is frequently the first stage of questionnaire development.

- **Pretest.** This stage of research involves testing a survey instrument before it is fielded in a feasibility test or on a large scale. The purpose of pretesting is to identify any errors in the instrument such as skip patterns or difficulty administered under simulated conditions. Pretesting may often be an iterative process until the researcher concludes that the instrument is in its best possible form and ready to be fielded.
- **Pilot study.** This stage of research involves testing of the developed research instruments and protocols on a small scale in preparation for a full study. Pilot or feasibility testing can uncover flaws in instrument design, sampling techniques, and the overall likelihood of success for a full field test. BJS intends to submit OMB clearance packages prior to conducting any pilot tests under the NCVS-RR program.
- **Field test.** This stage of research involves testing the effects of two or more procedures or questionnaires. The purpose of this field test would be to fully test the revised questionnaire design, data collection mode, and data processing. This will allow for a test of the survey procedures on a smaller scale that mirrors the full-scale implementation of the redesigned NCVS. BJS intends to submit OMB clearance packages prior to conducting any field test under the NCVS-RR program.

3. **Methods to Maximize Response**

Initial contact methods for the households in each sample for the NCVS-RR will vary by the project and design component being tested. Several of the current methods used to maximize response rates will be used in conjunction with the NCVS-RR. For instance, in the current NCVS, the Census Bureau mails advance letters explaining the nature of the study and the authority under which the survey is conducted. Interviewers carry identification cards, and potential respondents are assured their answers will be held in confidence and only used for statistical purposes.

Another method of maximizing response rates is to offer incentives to survey participants. BJS is considering the use of incentive payments in research for the NCVS Instrument Redesign and Testing Project as a method for increasing response rates and minimizing costly non-response follow-up with two waves of data collection. If BJS decides to pursue incentives as part of that design, the request and accompanying justification will be presented under the clearance request for that project.

Nonresponse is a critical outcome variable of interest in the methodological research. This will be examined by mode of data collection, and its impact upon estimates will be evaluated. Accordingly, information will be collected on how often and what type of follow-up is more likely to result in sampled households and members completing interviews.

4. Test of Procedures or Methods

The entire submission consists of tests of data collection instruments and supporting activities. It is anticipated that all of the research conducted under this clearance will result in questionnaires and procedures that minimize respondent burden, and improve the efficiency and efficacy of the ongoing victimization survey.

5. Consultation Information

The Victimization Statistics Unit at BJS takes responsibility for the overall design and management of the activities described in this submission, including developing study protocols, sampling procedures, and questionnaires and overseeing the conduct of the studies and analysis of the data by contractors. BJS is also working with staff at the Census Bureau to coordinate research activities with ongoing NCVS operations. BJS, Census Bureau, and current contractor contacts include:

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