

B. COLLECTIONS OF INFORMATION EMPLOYING STATISTICAL METHODS

The JRFC is a census of all facilities in the universe/frame. In the best of all possible scenarios, statistical estimation would not be required. However, given the inevitable facility non-response and item non-response, OJJDP (as in previous years) will work with the Census Bureau to ensure valid and reliable procedures to estimate the population characteristics.

1. Respondent Universe and Sampling Methods

For this census, OJJDP has defined the universe to include all facilities that hold juveniles as offenders. An offender is defined as a youth who has committed a crime or status offense¹ and who is being held because of that offense. It is important that the juvenile be held for the offense and not for some other problem behavior such as alcohol or drug abuse. Also, it is important that the facility specifically be holding the youth for the offense. OJJDP has defined juveniles to be any person under 18 years of age although many States define the age of majority differently (e.g., 16 in New York, 17 in Wisconsin).

OJJDP intends to survey all public and private facilities in the United States that fulfill these requirements. These facilities run the gamut of environments from open facilities in which the youth reside in a home environment to the high security training schools that house upwards of 400 youth.

OJJDP has determined that a census will serve the government's interest better than a sample survey. Based on the input from OJJDP's outside consultants, OJJDP determined that a nationally representative sample of facilities would not suffice. States wish to make comparisons among themselves, and given that juvenile justice policy is made at the State level, a national sample would not serve their purposes. Most States have only a few facilities (some with one or two). In order to create a sample that would suffice for making adequate State level estimates, OJJDP would in effect conduct a census in many States. Thus, to create the State level estimates of residential placement would almost require a national census.

2. Information Collection Procedures

OJJDP must maintain an accurate and complete list of all facilities that are of interest. To accomplish this task, OJJDP annually funds a broad agreement

¹Status offenses are those offenses which are illegal for minor but not for adults. For example truancy or running away may be a status offense depending on the State in which the juvenile resides. Other status offenses include ungovernability, underage drinking, or curfew violations.

with the Census Bureau to maintain a list of facilities that includes the name, address, location, phone numbers, and classification information. The Census Bureau has maintained such a list for a number of years. To maintain this list, the Census Bureau has developed procedures for assuring a complete list of facilities. These procedures include examining resource materials from professional organizations and State organizations, as well as periodically contacting agency personnel in the States able to provide information on new facilities, facility closings, and changes in facility characteristics.

As for the actual collection of the information, through the Census Bureau, OJJDP will pursue the following schedule:

Time frame	Action
4 weeks prior to reference date	mailout advance notice letter
2 weeks prior to reference date	mailout survey forms
1 week following reference date	mailout reminder letters (non-respondents only)
4 weeks following reference date	mailout a second-notice survey form (non-respondents only)
6 weeks following reference date	begin telephone follow-up

This schedule was developed based on experience with other censuses and experience in testing and administering the JRFC in previous years. Should circumstances require changes (most likely to move forward the telephone follow-ups), the schedule will be changed accordingly.

Typically, OJJDP has been able to achieve a high response rate (85-95 percent) for its facility based censuses. Such a level of response has proven sufficient for the designated analysis purposes. The Office expects to continue such a high response rate in future administrations of the JRFC.

3. Methods to Maximize Response Rates

OJJDP and the Census Bureau are committed to very high response rates and high quality data. To summarize, OJJDP will use the following techniques to maximize response:

- Electronic reporting in a manner acceptable to the respondent
- Streamlined forms and clear response instructions
- Continued support at the Census Bureau through a toll free number to answer any questions that arise
- Continuous contact with respondents through the mail (see the schedule for mailout and reminder notices above)
- Call-back procedures that continue until data close-out in April/May of the

following year.

These procedures have been developed and tested through the administration of the CIC and through four administrations of the JRFC. They have proven effective in achieving and maintaining a high response rate of which OJJDP and the Census Bureau are quite proud.

4. Tests of Procedures

The Census Bureau and OJJDP tested the data collection procedures in a field test that began in October 1998. This test included a sample of 500 facilities. It was not a random sample but rather a sampled based on facility type and facility size. The combination of these variables created a series of strata. The goal was to test the procedures on each stratum and to modify the data collection procedures as necessary. The results of this test resulted in several changes to the instrument and to the collection methods; however, these changes were more cosmetic rather than substantive. The content of the survey did not require changing, but the Census Bureau learned much about how to administer this type of survey to the facilities included.

Since then, OJJDP has worked with the Census Bureau and other consultants to periodically retest the instrument in the field, in particular at times when new questions or topics have been proposed. The last field test (for questions related to immunizations) occurred in 2006. Improvements were made to the form based on feedback received during these field tests.

5. Statistical Consultants

Presently, OJJDP funds an Interagency Agreement with the Governments Division at the Census Bureau to perform data collection, and to maintain the data file and address lists. This IAA also funds the imputation activity (ESMPD) related to the CJRP file.

OJJDP also funds an IAA with George Mason University for field testing of questions and form design issues, as well as a cooperative agreement with the National Center for Juvenile Justice to perform initial analysis of the JRFC data file, and to produce summary findings for publication and online dissemination.

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