

2011 Police Public Contact Questionnaire Summary

The 2011 PPCS instrument has undergone some change from the previous 2008 collection. The attached copy of the instrument has highlighted the new questions for ease of identification. There have also been changes to previously used questions have been revised to improve clarity and respondent understanding by adding fills from previous answers and adding language that improved the comprehension of the question based on cognitive testing results. A summary of the new items and changes made to existing items is explained below.

Section A: Contact Screener

The first addition, question 2, was added to understand the proportion of respondents who are familiar with officers assigned to their community. This is a question that should be asked of all individuals, even those who did not experience a contact, and thus the screener was determined to be the appropriate location for this question.

The main revision to the screener in the 2011 PPCS was made to improve selection into the long interview. Question 3 has been included to better understand the type of contacts that the respondent has had in the past 12 months. This question is the basis for moving into a series of questions directly related to the respondents' most recent contact. Recognizing that respondents may have multiple contacts of the same type, three additional items, questions 5a-5c, were added to help direct the respondent to recall the most recent event.

Sections B and C: Street Stops

This section is a new addition to the questionnaire, and employs modified versions of questions in the traffic stop section. Individuals will be tracked into this series of questions if they respond 'yes' to question 3e, and if reporting 'yes' to Check item B, reported that this was the most recent contact in 5b.

These traffic stop questions, which have been used in many of the previous collections, have been tailored to employ language related to a street stop but maintain parallel measurement to questions in the traffic stop section when possible. Items, such as question 9 and 17, have been revised to ask about a stop on the street rather than stop in a vehicle.

Additional questions have been added that are specific to street stops, capturing information on the reason for stop, length of time the respondent was stopped, and compliance with the officer. Similar to the situation where a respondent could be a passenger rather than a driver in a traffic stop, individuals could be part of a street stop where police are interested in someone in a group of people other than the respondent. Questions 9f and 9g have been added to ensure a comprehensive measure that captures all reasons for a street stop, even if the respondent is not the primary person of interest. Questions 18 and 19 have been added to estimate the respondents' perception of an appropriate amount of time for a street stop. Finally, questions 23 through 25 have been added to estimate compliance with law enforcement commands.

Sections D and E: Traffic Stops

Respondents are asked this series of questions if they respond with a 'yes' to question 3f OR 3g, and if reporting 'yes' to Check item B, reported that this was the most recent contact in 5b. This section contains little change from past collections. It includes only 2 new questions, questions 47 and 48, which parallel questions 18 and 19 in the street stop section. These questions have been added to estimate the respondents' perception of an appropriate amount of time for a traffic stop.

Section F: Voluntary Contacts

This series of questions are asked of the respondent if the individual responds 'yes' to questions 3a or 3b or 3d or 3h, if reporting 'yes' to Check item B, reported that this was the most recent contact in 5b. This final section includes new questions, items 71 through 76, which capture how an individual contacted police, perception of police service, and likelihood the respondent would contact police in the future. This section also includes parallels to the questions in the street and traffic stop sections regarding the perceived appropriate length of this contact.

The final summary questions have not changed from previous collections. Any respondent who reports a contact will be asked about their perception of police behavior. Also since this is the only national collection of non-lethal use of force by police, it is important to have a prevalence measure that includes force used at any point during the past year. Therefore, all respondents are asked question 85, if force was used during any of the respondents' earlier contacts during the year, not including the most recent.

The changes made to the 2011 PPCS instrument have improved the overall survey by reducing measurement error, and targeting specific information on the context of three types of contacts as well as police use of force.