



U.S. Department of Justice


Office of Justice Programs

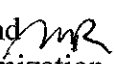
*Bureau of Justice Statistics*


Washington, D.C. 20531

**MEMORANDUM**

**MEMORANDUM TO:** Lynn Murray  
Justice Management Division

**THROUGH:** James P. Lynch   
Director  
Bureau of Justice Statistics

**FROM:** Michael Rand   
Chief, Victimization Statistics Branch  
Bureau of Justice Statistics

Shannan Catalano   
Statistician  
Bureau of Justice Statistics

**DATE:** May 25, 2011

**SUBJECT:** Methodological Research to Support the National  
Crime Victimization Survey: *Examination of Data  
Collection Methods for the NCVS*

---

The Bureau of Justice Statistics is conducting research to test the use of self-administration modes of data collection for the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS). The test, to be carried out by Research Triangle Institute, International, supports the NCVS program by exploring survey methods that increase survey participation while maintaining affordable costs.

The attached memorandum requests clearance from OMB to conduct cognitive and usability testing for the project prior to the field test in fall 2011. Participants for the cognitive and usability testing will be compensated \$40 for their time. An estimated, 53-68 burden hours are being requested. The final number of hours will be dependent upon the number of cognitive interviews required to refine the instruments

for the field test. These burden hours are drawn down from the generic clearance burden hours designated for NCVS research (No. 1121-0325).

BJS is exploring survey methods to increase survey participation while maintaining affordable costs and data quality in the future. This includes providing respondents with more options for participation and testing whether nominal incentives increase subsequent survey participation when self-administration modes such as inbound CATI, Web and mail are utilized.

BJS will use the findings from this research to decide whether mail or Web self-administration is viable for the NCVS. Cognitive interviewing may indicate that mail is not viable given the complexity of the survey; however, the Web application will likely prove of greater utility due to its automated format. If findings indicate that Web administration is well received by respondents, then BJS would consider the incorporation of this mode into the survey, perhaps in later interviewing cycles when rapport has been established with respondents during previous in-person interviews.

Of more promise to the NCVS program is the addition of inbound CATI into the NCVS program. CATI historically relies on the use of outbound phone calls to sampled households from centralized interviewing facilities. Inbound CATI allows respondents to call the centralized facility to initiate the interview. BJS is particularly interested in the utility of inbound CATI as a method of increasing the convenience, and willingness, to participate in the NCVS. The re-introduction of outbound CATI to the NCVS program is currently under consideration at BJS, and should respondents prove receptive to inbound CATI in the current research, then BJS will make a decision as to whether inbound CATI should be introduced in conjunction with outbound CATI.

BJS considers the testing of nominal incentives as a secondary benefit of the mixed mode research. Incentives have never been used in the NCVS, and there is generally little support for the use of payments in government surveys. However, if findings from the research indicate substantial cost savings and higher response rates through the use of incentives, BJS may reconsider the usefulness of nominal incentives when coupled with self-administered modes of interviewing. The mixed modes research design is well-suited to answer this question as the Wave II interviews will provide a follow-up measure to test the effects of Wave I contacts including the mode on interviewing and whether respondents and households received an incentive amount during the first interview.

The use of incentives represents a significant departure from current administration of the NCVS. BJS held discussions with OMB regarding the study and the rationale for including payments to respondents as part of the study design. In 2009 OMB indicated using incentives was acceptable if the experimental conditions were clearly defined and the research design allowed for a test of incentives versus non-incentive

conditions. As a result, the RTI project design was refined to include \$0 and \$10 incentive amounts to conform to OMB's criteria.

With the addition of the \$0 incentive amounts, the experimental design is able to produce findings on whether the use of nominal incentives during the first interview increases respondent participation in a subsequent interview. The use of incentives is usually justified as a method of increasing response rates within a survey, and although this is the rationale for their inclusion in the current research, BJS is primarily interested in whether incentives provide an effective means of reducing costly follow-up visits with respondents to complete interviews.

The following questions will be addressed by this research:

1. How do alternative mixed-mode designs compare to the current design in terms of response rate and cost?
2. What portion of the household respondents will respond to an initial interview by inbound CATI, and what cost savings might be realized?
3. Does initial rapport between interviewer and respondent carry over into subsequent self-administered interviews?
4. How will survey estimates change (if at all) if different mode mixes and incentives are used?
5. Does the use of nominal incentives affect interview cost or response rates within alternative modes of administration?
6. Are nominal incentives effective in boosting response rates and maintaining rapport with a household in subsequent waves of interviewing?