

Attachment 11: Study Summary and Requirements Sent to Police Departments

BJS LETTERHEAD

DATE

Police Chief Doe
4660 Main Street
Local Town, STATE, XXXX
XXXXX

Dear Police Chief Doe:

The US Bureau of Justice Statistics is currently revising the procedures used for the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS). The NCVS is a national survey on that collects information on the frequency, characteristics and consequences of criminal victimization in the United States. These data are used to track trends in crime over time, as well as characterize the experience of victims. We are writing you to see if [CITY] is interested in collaborating with us on a study that seeks to improve the NCVS methodology.

As part of the study, we will attempt to conduct a victimization survey with a random sample of households in particular areas in [CITY]. We would also like to include a sample of addresses where the resident(s) had reported a crime to the police. Crime victimization is relatively rare in the general population. By including addresses from which a crime has been reported, it will be possible to test the new methodology with a significant number of persons who have experienced a victimization.

I have included an attachment that provides a short summary of the study, including what we would request from your department and the proposed methodology. In the next few days, someone from Westat, a contractor that is carrying out this project for BJS, will be contacting you to discuss this study with you. If you would like to talk with someone at BJS, please contact Michael Rand, Senior Statistician at BJS at (202) 616-3494. If there is someone you would prefer for us to contact in lieu of yourself, please let us know by contacting Pat Dean Brick at 301517-4196 or by e-mail at patdeanbrick@westat.com.

Sincerely,

Michael Rand
Senior Statistician
Bureau of Justice Statistics

Study Summary

The purpose of this study is to test the feasibility of using Interactive Voice Response (IVR) for the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS). IVR is a methodology that has a computer read the survey questions over the telephone and the respondent provide answers by either using their keypad or by speaking. IVR has the potential to reduce the costs of conducting the NCVS and could be used as a way to follow-up households within the NCVS sample and/or as a way to conduct local area surveys. It also has the potential to improve the measurement of sensitive crimes that are better reported using a self-administered mode of interviewing.

The study will sample addresses in 3 cities. At each address, an adult will be randomly selected to report about any crimes against the household (e.g., burglary, household theft, motor vehicle theft) and against the respondent (e.g. robbery, assault). Three different methods of interviewing will be compared: (1) IVR after a telephone interviewer contacts the household, (2) IVR after the household is contacted by mail and (3) a telephone interview. The telephone interview condition is used to compare the IVR to current methods being used on the NCVS. The study will evaluate the extent respondents co-operate with the different methods and the extent they report victimizations.

The sample size for the study is 13,000 addresses across the 3 cities. Within each city, the sampled addresses will be drawn from two different sources. One source will be a random sample of addresses taken from a listing provided by the United States Postal Service. The second source will be a sample of addresses taken from records of crimes reported to the police. The use of the police records will enable the study to fully test the different methodologies with a significant number of individuals who report a victimization.

Information Requirements for Police Records

Types of Crime to be covered by police records. Study staff will work with the police department to determine the mix of crimes that would be included in the sample. Pending discussions with the departments, the study would like to sample both violent and property crimes. It would exclude: (1) Crimes involving domestic disputes, (2) Sexual violence and (3) Any crimes involving ongoing investigations.

Time Frame to be covered by police records. Crimes occurring within 12-months from the time the respondent is interviewed. This timing is important ensure the survey will be asking about crimes that occurred during the prior 12-month period.

Information provided in each crime record. For each crime record, the study would need the address of the person that reported it, the type of crime and victim demographics (if personal crime) such as age and gender. We will not ask for the name of the victim or the person that reported the crime to the police.

Study Procedures

Method of contact. Sampled addresses will be sent a letter which explains the study. This letter will provide basic information about the study and the conditions related to participation. If the initial contact is by telephone, an interviewer will call the household who is a randomly select adult. If the initial contact is by mail, the notification letter will ask that the adult with the next birthday call the IVR system to take the survey.¹

Informed consent. In the introductory material, the respondent will be told that:

1. The study is being conducted for the US Bureau of Justice Statistics.
2. The study is voluntary.
3. The study obtained the sample from two sources: (a) a random sample of addresses in the community and (b) police records of individuals reporting a crime to the police.
4. The study will not collect the name of the respondent.
5. The study will maintain the confidentiality of the data. With respect to confidentiality, all data collected by BJS are protected by federal law 42 USC 3789g.

¹ This is the standard method for a respondent to be selected in telephone surveys.