

B. Statistical Methods

Overview

The Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) will obtain data for its Firearm Inquiry Statistics (FIST) program through a voluntary survey administered to state and local agencies that conduct background check activities for firearm purchase and transfers. There are currently thirty-two state agency reporters¹ and over 1,300 local reporting agencies that conduct background checks on persons who apply to purchase a firearm or for a permit that may be used to make a purchase. As addressed in Part A, each state government determines the extent of its involvement in the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) process. States may operate as a full point-of-contact (POC) state that requests a NICS check on all firearm transfers originating in the state, as a partial POC that requests a NICS check on all handgun transfers (Federal Firearm Licensees (FFL) are required to contact the FBI for NICS checks for long gun transfers), or as a non-POC in which case FFLs are required to contact the FBI for NICS checks on all firearm transfers originating in the state. BJS's current FIST data collection agent, the Regional Justice Information Service (REJIS), maintains a comprehensive list a list of state and local agencies that conduct background checks and their associated functions in the NICS process. BJS's frame maintenance activities are described in more detail in the proceeding discussion.

The current FIST data collection agent, the Regional Justice Information Service (REJIS) will obtain data from the state and local checking agencies. The state and local data will be combined with FBI NICS transaction data to create an estimate of the total number of firearm purchase application received and denied annually. Additional data will be collected on reasons for denial, appeals, and arrests. REJIS will also collect data on referrals of FBI denials for investigation and prosecution from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) Denial Enforcement and NICS Intelligence (DENI) Branch.

Information Collection Procedures

The 2013 FIST survey² will be administered through a survey to thirty-two state agency reporters that serve an entire state population, including Washington, DC, a statewide census of local checking agencies in six states, and a sample of local checking agencies in four states. The data obtained from state and local agencies will be combined with FBI NICS transaction data to create an estimate of the total number of applications received and denied annually. The 2013 FIST collection will utilize a multi-mode design to allow respondents to submit data via web-form, email, paper survey, or fax. Recognizing that this is a voluntary survey, all reasonable efforts will be made to make the data collection process as seamless and convenient as possible for respondents. BJS's FIST data collection agent for the 2013 collection, the Regional Justice Information Service (REJIS),³ maintains a list of reporting agencies and their preferred

¹ State agency reporters include full or partial NICS Point of Contact (POC) states and those states for which local agencies may conduct the background checks but local agencies report their activity to a state-level entity. It is this state level entity that provides the complete state-wide counts of applications for firearms transfers or permits, denials, and sometimes reasons for denial, to FIST. All fifty states and Washington, D.C., are covered in the FIST collection either through data obtained via the FIST survey or the FBI NICS transaction data.

² As addressed in Part A, BJS is requesting approval under this clearance to implement the FIST data collection for calendar years 2013, 2014, and 2015. For ease of review only 2013 is referenced in the supporting statements.

³ As addressed in Part A, the FY 2014 FIST solicitation will be competitively bid and a data collection agent will be selected via a peer review process.

data submission methods so that data requests and follow up efforts can be tailored to individual agency characteristics.

State agency reporters

REJIS will collect 2013 FIST data from state agency reporters via state issued reports, state websites, web-form, email, paper survey, or fax. Some state agencies that have participated in the FIST collection for multiple years have routinely and voluntarily submitted to REJIS state-issued reports prepared by the state for legislative purposes that contain various data related to criminal justice statistics from which REJIS can extract relevant data on firearm background check activities. Other state agencies publish data on background check activities on their state website. REJIS maintains a list of agencies that track data via these methods and will attempt to collect the information directly from the state reports or websites in order to reduce the respondent burden. In these circumstances, REJIS will verify the accuracy of the data with the agency. There will be no duplication of effort required for the state agencies that choose to submit information through these methods, and the associated burden will consist of the time spent emailing the reports to REJIS and/or verifying data.

Local checking agencies

REJIS will collect data from states that operate local checking agencies via web-form, email, paper survey, or fax. REJIS maintains a list of local agencies and the type of background check each agency is responsible for conducting and agency POCs will be surveyed to request participation in the FIST collection.

For both state agency reporters and local agency respondents, REJIS will continue to be flexible in its data collection methods and accept data in whatever form (mail, fax, electronically) is most convenient for the respondent agency. While about 23% of respondents submitted data via the new web-form, the preferred response mode for the 2012 FIST collection continued to be the paper survey (about 77 %). The steps that BJS and REJIS will take for the 2013 collection to promote the use of the web-form, maximize response rates, and reduce respondent burden are outlined in Part A of this supporting statement.

FBI and ATF data

REJIS will continue to obtain relevant data from the FBI NICS section and ATF DENI Branch to complete the analysis and preparation of FIST data. In 2012, REJIS obtained data on applications and denials from the FBI NICS Section via fax with year-end totals. REJIS also received a monthly fax from the FBI that included federal totals. Data on denials and appeals are obtained via the NICS Operation report and other FBI data that are publicly available on the FBI website and/or have been obtained from the FBI by BJS. REJIS received data on FBI denials that are screened by DENI and referred to the ATF field offices for investigation directly from the ATF DENI Branch to compile the relevant data on post-denial activities.

1. Respondent universe

Background

The FIST program is unique in the varied nature of the checking agencies to be surveyed. This uniqueness is a product of Federal law (notably the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act of 1993) plus a variety of state statutes that govern how background checks for firearm transfers and permits are conducted within certain states. For the 2012 collection, the FIST sample was redrawn for the first time since the program's inception in 1995.

BJS and REJIS worked extensively to build the FIST frame and determined that eligible agencies in the frame should be those agencies that are authorized to conduct *and are known to* conduct background checks. Such agencies are accounted for in the universe because these are the agencies that collect and/or maintain data on the critical FIST data elements: applications, denials, and (as available) reasons for denial, appeals, and arrests.

For the FIST program, there is an important distinction to be made between agencies authorized by statute to conduct background checks and those that actually do the checks. Although in certain states local agencies are legally authorized to conduct background checks for firearm transfers or permits, these agencies are not *required* to do so. REJIS identified a sizable number of instances where a local agency (usually a municipal police department) that was legally authorized by state statute to conduct a background check had never actually conducted background check activities and was unlikely to ever do so. Instead, transfer and permit applicants who might use such a local agency are directed to another local authority (usually the county sheriff) with jurisdiction to conduct a transfer check or issue a permit. For the purpose of FIST, BJS determined that these agencies should be considered out of scope because they do not actually conduct firearm background check activities and/or track information on such activities, which are the critical data collection items on the survey.

Thus, the local agencies that have delegated background check functions are not included in the frame. Accordingly, only those agencies that are known to conduct background checks or have some involvement in or information on the application process for a firearm transfer or permit are represented. As a result, the number of local agencies in the FIST frame decreased from about 3,000 agencies that are known to be authorized to conduct firearm background check activity to about 1,300 that are known to actually participate in these activities and are thus eligible to participate in the FIST data collection.

The decrease in the size of the FIST frame and fact that the vast majority of FIST data is comprised of counts provided by FBI and state agency reporters results in a relatively small proportion (less than 10%) of the FIST national estimate being derived from the local agency population.

2013 FIST universe

The 2013 FIST universe is composed of the following:

- Thirty-one states (including the District of Columbia) that rely entirely on the FBI's NICS to conduct firearm background check activities
- Thirty-two state agency reporters that provide complete statewide counts of applications for firearms transfers or permits, denials of applications, and (as available) reasons for denial, appeals, and arrests

- 1,300 local checking agencies in ten states that issue permits, track applications and denials, or conduct background checks for various types of firearm permit or transfer systems

Attachment V provides a breakdown of how FIST data are obtained by state (via FBI NICS, state agency reporter, and/or local agencies). As detailed in the attachment, some states appear on more than one list due to the state's division of NICS checks and/or fact that the state conducts more than one type of check or issues more than one type of permit.

Frame generation and frame maintenance activities

In order to generate the revised FIST frame for the 2012 collection, REJIS, under BJS's direction, utilized multiple data sources combined with a large known pool of past FIST responders. First, REJIS included over one-third of the number of local agencies that were determined to be in the new frame. These agencies were known to have responded to the FIST survey at least once in the prior three years and had a verified status of conducting background checks for firearm transfers. Other data sources and resources used to expand and verify the FIST frame were:

- The 2008 Census of State and local law enforcement
- A recent (as of the time of frame creation) FBI Originating Agency Identifier (ORI) file of all known law enforcement agencies in the U.S.
- Published lists from professional officer associations such as state Sheriffs' and Police Chiefs' association lists and officer standards and training office lists.
- In most states where the authorized background check agency is a county level agency, it is assumed that all of these agencies (often Sheriff's offices) are eligible to be in the FIST frame, unless information about a particular agency's checking or permitting status is known from past FIST collections.
- In certain states, the authorized checking agency or reporting agency is not a law enforcement agency at all, but rather another county government authority. For example, in Georgia, the authorized checking agencies are the county probate courts. In the state of New York, most of the agencies reporting to FIST are county clerks' offices, depending on the county.
- Where the checking status of an agency, law enforcement or otherwise, could not be verified with publicly available information (usually via the agency's website), the agency was contacted directly for verification of its background check responsibilities.

2013 FIST frame

State statutes determine which agencies conduct background checks for a firearm permit or transfer, thus there are typically no or few changes from year to year in agencies that conduct background check activities. REJIS used the 2012 FIST frame as the basis and made the following modifications after reviewing applicable state laws and information provided in the screener questions on the 2012 FIST survey:

- Michigan: Twenty-seven local agencies that were determined to be out of scope were removed from the frame. The state is counted as a state agency responder because permits are tallied at the state level.

- Delaware: One state agency and three local agencies that were determined to be out of scope due to a change in state law were removed from the frame.
- Alaska: The state is now counted as a state agency reporter because the state agency is now issuing exempt carry permits.

The following frame maintenance activities have been and/or will continue to be completed to assess the completeness of the 2013 FIST frame and build future FIST frames:

- The proposed 2013 FIST survey includes additional screener questions to determine an agency's eligibility to participate in the FIST collection.
- The proposed 2013 FIST survey includes language designed to clarify that an agency has data because it is responsible for issuing permits, tracking applications, or conducting background checks for firearm purposes (as addressed in Part A).
- BJS is exploring the utility of adding a screener question to the Census of State and Local Law Enforcement Agencies (CSLLEA) survey instrument to inquire if respondent agencies conducted background checks for firearm permits or transfers during the reference year.
- REJIS will review the Police Chiefs and Sheriffs associations' publications of law enforcement agencies to assess if any new agencies need to be added to the sample.

Prior year FIST response rates

2010 FIST collection

The most recent publication reporting on FIST data is the Background Checks for Firearm Transfers, 2010. The response rate for the 2010 FIST collection (which utilized a tally sheet as the survey instrument and the same sample drawn in 1995) was 85%. This was a notable improvement from the 2009 response rate, which was 69%. In 2010 BJS implemented a regimented multiple follow-up contact strategy that included extensive follow-up with non-respondents.

2012 FIST collection

BJS and REJIS implemented a new sampling plan and revised survey for the 2012 FIST collection. REJIS is currently analyzing the data for the 2012 collection and estimates an overall preliminary response rate of 76%. This rate was calculated based on the responses received from the state agency reporters and the local agencies in the main sample plus the two reserve samples that were implemented during the collection. Additional discussion about the sampling plan and use of reserve samples is provided in subsequent sections.

As addressed in Part A, BJS does not believe that the estimated twenty-five minute burden was the primary factor that resulted in the lower response rate in 2012 (compared to 2010). Rather, the lower response rate can likely be attributed to the fact that the 2012 collection employed a new sampling design that included new agencies that were asked to participate in the data collection for the first time. REJIS will continue to utilize different strategies for the 2013 collection to maximize the response rate and minimize the respondent burden, including employing multi-modal submission options (web-form, email, paper survey, and fax), following a rigorous contact schedule, and tailoring FIST correspondence to individual agencies to include language specific to the types of permits and checks that the agency is responsible for conducting.

Non-response bias analysis

BJS is currently working with REJIS to assess the response rate for the 2012 collection. The response rate for the thirty-two state agency reporters was 100%. REJIS identified five states in the census and sampled states within which the response rate for the local agencies fell below 80%: Georgia, Idaho, North Carolina, Nebraska, and New York. BJS and REJIS are in the process of conducting a non-response bias analysis for these states. BJS will employ this same strategy for the 2013 FIST collection.

2. Procedures for the collection of information

Proposed 2013 FIST sample stratification and sample selection

BJS is requesting OMB approval to utilize the same sampling design and sampling plan implemented for the 2012 FIST collection for the 2013 collection. The data collected from the thirty-one FBI NICS states and the thirty-two state agency reporters are actual counts. Therefore, BJS and REJIS worked extensively to develop the most appropriate sampling plan for the ten states that authorize local agencies to conduct a background check for some type of firearm permit or transfer. Specifically, the ten states that operate local checking agencies are: Georgia (GA); Minnesota (MN); Nebraska (NE); Washington (WA); Iowa (IA); Idaho (ID); Montana (MT); North Carolina (NC); Nevada (NV); and New York (NY).

The sample of local checking agencies will be redrawn for the 2013 collection. BJS proposes to again employ an enumeration of local agencies in six of the ten states in which the local agencies are responsible for conducting background checks and provide data to FIST. Agencies responsible for conducting background checks in the four remaining states (GA, MN, NE, and WA) will be sampled due to the relatively greater number of agencies in these states compared to the other six. In these four states, a stratified sample will be created based on population size that roughly equates to:

- Category 1) rural – places of less than 10,000 population;
- Category 2) small cities – places of between 10,000 and 99,999 population;
- Category 3) small metropolitan areas – places of between 100,000 and 199,999 population; and
- Category 4) large metropolitan areas – places of 200,000 or more population.

These population categories were selected to be consistent with definitions of various census place levels. Additionally, they allow the collection to maintain some consistency with portions of the methodology utilized for previous FIST collections. Sampling will be done for agencies in Categories 1 and 2, while the agencies in Categories 3 and 4 will be kept in the sample as certainty.

BJS will utilize a simple random sample, proportionate to size, for each state. BJS and REJIS determined that a sample size of 761 is needed to implement this sampling design with the appropriate precision to calculate a reliable national estimate from individual state-level estimates, and to improve the overall robustness of the sample. Attachment VI provides the formula used to determine the sample size and weight allocation for the stratified sample of the four states taken as a group as well as the formula used to determine the sample size of a simple random sample in each state. Appropriate sampling weights will be assigned such that state-level estimates may be made in addition to a national estimate.

BJS will plan for unknown nonresponse by creating two reserve samples within each of the four sampled states with a 15% oversample for each. Because all local checking agencies in Categories 3 and 4 will be

surveyed, this reserve sample only impacts agencies in Categories 1 and 2. In total, there will be a 30% reserve sample for each of the four states that are sampled. The 15% sample will be taken of the entire population of units in any one category and will be added on top of the sample size. Agencies will be randomly assigned to one of the two reserve samples so that the probability of selection will equal the initial probability of selection times the probability of being assigned to a reserve sample. If a response rate within any state falls below 85%, the first reserve sample will be initiated. If the response rate falls below 75% after the first reserve sample is instituted, the second reserve sample will be employed.

Estimation procedures

The FIST data collected from state and local agencies will be combined with the FBI NICS transaction data to create an estimate of the total number of firearm purchase applications received and denied annually. As addressed previously, the FBI provides to REJIS data on transactions and denial via a faxed report for monthly and year-end aggregate totals (the FBI refers to these data as Total Federal Inquiries and Federal Denials). REJIS will apply population weighting factors to integrate these data with the FIST survey data to generate and national estimates of applications and denials. *Weighting and nonresponse weighting adjustment*

The 2013 FIST data collection will provide for two basic weighting structures for respondent agencies: a weight applied to self-representing (SR) agencies and a weight applied to non-self-representing (NSR) agencies.

SR agencies (enumerated)

Each checking agency within the six states in which all known eligible agencies were contacted will receive a base weight of 1 ($w_1 = 1$). In addition to the base weight, a nonresponse adjustment will be applied to responding agencies to compensate for those agencies who did not respond (w_2). Because bias may be introduced with a nonresponse adjustment, BJS will mitigate response bias by controlling adjustments to population size. Therefore, the nonresponse adjustment will consist of a ratio adjustment of the sum of all agencies' populations served in the universe (per state and population size category) to the sum of the populations' served by all respondent agencies (again, per state and population size category).

NSR agencies (sampled)

The process for calculating weights for NSR agencies⁴ will be similar to that for SR agencies with the exception that these agencies (in strata 1 and 2) will receive a base weight >1 according to the population-based stratum and the state in which they reside. Weights will be adjusted for any agencies that are identified to be out of scope in the sampled states.

Weighting strategy

The final weights applied to each FIST case will be the product of a base weight applied to each agency and a nonresponse adjustment weight ($w_1 \times w_2 = Fw$). For the purposes of the FIST collection, agencies considered to be out of scope (ineligible) will be those that have indicated they do not currently have a

⁴ Only agencies in the first two strata (for small agencies) were given weights. The large agency stratum were not due to the agency's population served size and the small number of agencies within these categories.

role in the issuance of firearm permits and transfers or are not actively conducting background checks for them.

Item nonresponse imputation

For the 2012 FIST collection, REJIS determined that there were very few cases in which information on applications for firearm transfers or permits (a critical data element) was missing. There were more cases of missing data for denials but still very few compared to other missing data (e.g. reasons for denial). BJS anticipates that this will hold true for the 2013 FIST collection based on the respondents' consistency in reporting of the critical data items that has been observed throughout FIST's extensive history. To address cases of missing data for the 2013 FIST collection, a mean value imputation by state by population based stratum will be conducted.

Estimating missing state-provided information for annual applications and denials

To address missing data for state agency reporters, REJIS will apply a linear interpolation to the data to estimate the number of applications and denials by state.

Degree of required accuracy

Standard errors

In order to assess the reliability of the estimates, REJIS will calculate standard errors for the sampled states and national estimates. As noted, only four (GA, MN, NE, WA) of the ten states will be sampled as opposed to enumerated and the state agency reporters (along with the FBI NICS states) comprise the vast majority of respondents. Thus, about 90% of the national estimate comes from FIST reporting on complete counts of background check activity, which means that standard error calculations will apply to a very small portion (less than 10%) of the national estimate. Nonresponse adjustments will be made to account for error from nonresponse.

REJIS will also calculate confidence intervals for the estimated portion and the overall national FIST estimate at the 95% confidence level. BJS will publish the standard error tables in the Background Checks for Firearm Transfers, 2013 publication.

2012 FIST standard errors and confidence intervals

Due to the fact that BJS and REJIS are currently conducting data analysis on the 2012 FIST data, information on the standard error and confidence interval calculations for the 2012 FIST collection is not yet available. This information will be provided in the Background Checks for Firearm Transfers, 2012 publication. Attachment VII provides the standard errors and confidence intervals published for the most recent publication in this series, Background Checks for Firearm Transfers, 2010. However, the study design for the 2010 collection utilized the original FIST sampling frame, survey design, and tally sheet, so it is expected that the standard errors and confidence intervals will improve as a result of the enhancements made to the 2012 FIST design.

Issues unique to the FIST data collection

As addressed in earlier sections, the functions that checking agencies in the FIST universe are responsible for conducting are based on Federal law and a variety of state statutes that govern how background checks for firearms transfers and permits operate within each state. Moreover, the terminology used for background check functions varies across jurisdictions and using terms different from what an agency is accustomed to can be a source of great confusion for respondents, notably for local agencies representing smaller and rural areas that are familiar with only their state-specific terminology as it relates to firearm transfers and permits. Additionally, while most of the FIST local agency respondents are law enforcement agencies, other agency types are also included (such as probate court or county clerk offices). These agencies may not be familiar with the jargon used by law enforcement agencies or the terms may not be relevant to the work they conduct.

BJIS and REJIS addressed this issue for the 2010 and 2012 collections by including definitions for the permit types in the survey and providing technical assistance to responders when requested. However, based on the amount of technical assistance that REJIS provided to respondents to clarify the use of terms in the survey, BJS and REJIS have determined that the language used in the FIST correspondence and in the survey instrument should be revised to match the terms that the state is familiar with (e.g., referring only to the permit types that the agency is responsible for conducting and tailoring permit type names to match those used within the state) in order to improve the accuracy and reliability of the FIST data, as well as to lessen burden and maximize the response rate.

As addressed in Section A, BJS proposes to improve its data collection strategy for the 2013 collection by deploying surveys with state-specific terminology to respondent agencies and tailoring the FIST correspondence to include terms that the respondent agency is familiar with.

Sample of specific state and local issues

The below list provides specific examples of some of the unique issues by state that have been identified in the sample of local agencies and have been accounted for in the FIST methodology to ensure that relevant data on background check activities are being collected. REJIS was able to identify these issues given their extensive involvement in and history working with the FIST data collection and the agency's intimate knowledge of firearm background check procedures and activities.

Georgia

The local POCs in Georgia for the FIST survey are Probate Courts (the only probate court responders in the FIST collection), which provide information on exempt carry permit applications and denials. Administration of the FIST survey has shown that these permits are most commonly known within the Georgia court system as "Concealed Weapons Licenses."

Minnesota

There are both state level and local FIST POCs in Minnesota. The Minnesota Department of Public Safety – Bureau of Criminal Apprehension is contacted to confirm data they provide in an annual report of data on the state's Permit to Carry (an exempt carry permit). Local police departments and county sheriffs are asked for data they collect on Permits to Purchase/Transfer (in the FIST category of purchase permit). Not all local police departments or Sheriff offices issue permits or conduct background checks for the permits; rather, some local police departments contract with the county Sheriff or another police

department for their residents served to obtain permits with the contracted agency. This varies by police department and county. Counts of the populations served must then be adjusted to reflect this situation. Finally, there is the option for a Minnesota resident who lacks a permit to obtain a firearm through a one-time transfer from a dealer, after a background check by a local agency. However, in 2012 there was only one report of such a transfer.

Nevada

In Nevada, both a state agency contact and local agencies are surveyed for FIST. The Nevada Department of Public Safety (DPS) is the POC for all transfer checks that occur when a purchaser attempts to obtain a firearm from an FFL. DPS provides data on the number of applications for Point of Sale transfers of firearms from FFLs throughout the state. Generally, FIST obtains data on Carry Concealed Weapons Permit (an exempt carry permit) applications from county Sheriffs, except in the cases of Carson City (considered an independent city) and the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department, which reports for Clark County.

New York

New York requires a license to possess, carry, or acquire a handgun and certain other types of firearms. The state's Pistol/Revolver License application is a standard form used by all local agencies. Generally, counties in New York State have considerable discretion in processing Pistol/Revolver Licenses. This license is categorized for FIST as a purchase permit. In addition to the license, the state also requires a prospective handgun purchaser to obtain a "license amendment" for any additional firearm purchase other than the one initially granted with a new license. Each amendment for a firearm purchase (also called a "purchase coupon" by some local agencies) requires an additional background check. FIST attempts to capture the data in these amendments as well.

A license is authorized by a city or county licensing officer who has discretion to specify conditions for possessing or carrying the handgun described in the license. The law most relevant to FIST is that a valid license must be presented to a dealer in order to receive a handgun. Licensing functions include the granting of a license, maintaining records of applications, denials and approved licenses, and conducting background checks. Each jurisdiction divides its function in a different way. Generally, the county sheriff (or in some counties, the sheriff in addition to several municipal police departments) conducts the background check for applications for new licenses and purchase coupons. Applications for licenses/amendments are processed by county clerks in many counties and are, more often than not, the records keepers for licenses. The decision on whether or not to deny an applicant an amendment or license resides with a local judge (or judges, in larger counties). Thus, there are three separate entities potentially involved in the process of obtaining a license or amendment. FIST typically reaches out to county clerks for data on applications and denials of licenses. In other instances, the POC for FIST is the county sheriff.

The terminology used to describe the New York State license also varies from county to county. In some jurisdictions, this license is referred to as a "handgun license," "pistol permit," or a "concealed carry" license. The reason the license may be referred to as a "concealed carry permit" is likely due to language contained within the license application form, whereby the applicant is prompted to select from three

types of license designations: 1) carry concealed, 2) possess on premises, 3) possess/carry during employment.

Finally, New York state law governs most counties in the same manner with the exception of New York City, Westchester County and Suffolk County. The New York City approval process is more stringent than the rest of the state, and is carried out entirely by the New York City Police Department (NYPD). Data from the NYPD is obtained via a Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) request. Data on pistol licenses is obtained through the Westchester County Police department, the Suffolk Sheriff; and Suffolk County Police Department.

Washington

Data on applications and denials of handgun transfers for Washington are collected from County sheriffs and municipal police departments. The local agencies conduct point of transfer checks after receiving applications from licensed dealers. As with other situations in which both municipal and county level agencies are surveyed, there are instances when smaller agencies contract with larger ones or several agencies utilize a central location to conduct checking activity. These arrangements vary by county and the populations served are controlled to reflect these instances.

2013 FIST collection

Through the agency's extensive history working with the FIST collection, REJIS has developed a comprehensive list of issues specific to each state and maintains a list of terminology used by agencies within each state and is well equipped to account for these unique qualities. As noted, BJS and REJIS will employ additional steps (e.g. using a survey instrument with state-specific terminology to respondents and continuing to tailor correspondence and outreach efforts) to address these and any other unique issues identified during the collection period.

Use of periodic data collection

Not applicable. FIST data will be collected on an annual basis.⁵

3. Methods to maximize response rates and deal with issues of non-response

As noted, BJS will plan for unknown nonresponse by creating two reserve samples within each of the four sampled states with a 15% oversample for each. Agencies will be randomly assigned to one of the two reserve samples so that the probability of selection will equal the initial probability of selection times the probability of being assigned to a reserve sample. If a response rate within any state falls below 85%, the first reserve sample will be initiated. If the response rate falls below 75% after the first reserve sample is instituted, the second reserve sample will be employed. Because all local agencies in Categories 3 and 4 will be surveyed, the reserve sample only impacts agencies in Categories 1 and 2. In total, there will be a 30% reserve sample for each of the four states that are sampled. The 15% sample will be taken of the entire population of units in any one category and will be added on top of the sample size.

⁵ As addressed in Part A, BJS did not implement the FIST collection for calendar year 2011 data. BJS intends to collect FIST data on an annual basis in subsequent years.

BJS and REJIS are currently assessing nonresponse for the 2012 FIST collection and plan to conduct a nonresponse bias analysis for any state in which the response rate fell below 80%. BJS will use the findings from this assessment to address potential nonresponse for the 2013 FIST collection and will also conduct a nonresponse bias analysis for the 2013 data if the response rate within any state that falls below 80%.

As discussed in Part A, in order to maximize the response rate and minimize the respondent burden, REJIS will continue to encourage the use of the web-form reporting option and, due to the fact that the paper survey was the preferred response mode for the 2012 collection, will continue to employ multi-modal submission options (web-form, email, paper survey, or fax) to decrease the respondent burden. REJIS will also continue to employ a rigorous contact schedule to maximize the response rate and will make all attempts to personalize and tailor FIST correspondence to individual agencies to include language specific to the types of permits and checks that the agency is responsible for conducting.

4. Tests of procedures or methods

None planned.

5. Contact information

For information on the FIST statistical methodology, conducting the survey, uses of FIST data, and/or analyzing the data, contact:

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Washington, D.C. 20531
Phone: 202-307-0765
Email: Allina.Lee@usdoj.gov

Attachments:

- Attachment I. BJS authority
- Attachment II. Non-substantive change request to OMB

Contains:
Screenshots of FIST web-form
Responses to FIST survey testing
Analysis of burden

- Attachment III. 2013 FIST survey and proposed changes from 2012 instrument
- Attachment IV. FIST correspondence

- Attachment V. FIST universe
- Attachment VI. Proposed 2013 FIST sample determination and allocation
- Attachment VII. 2010 FIST standard errors