

B. Statistical Methods

1. Respondent Universe

The survey will be provided to the central criminal history record repositories in 56 jurisdictions including the 50 States, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, the N. Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. These entities represent the entire population of central criminal history repositories. Thus, the survey does not involve any sampling, methods for stratification, imputations or similar statistical methods. The most recent survey (yearend 2012) achieved a 95% response rate with some follow up effort (all 50 states responded, but no responses were received from the District of Columbia, N. Mariana Islands, and the Virgin Islands). A similar response rate is anticipated for the yearend 2014 collection.

2. Procedures for Collecting the Information

Respondents will have access to online, password-protected reporting forms (three screenshots from the 2012 web-based survey are included as Attachment 4). For the 2012 collection, 47 (88.6 %) of the 53 respondents submitted their information via the web-based form (4 submitted via fax and 2 via the U.S. mail). A similar distribution is anticipated for the 2014 collection. The web-based forms will automatically populate databases that will be accessible by respondents online, thereby reducing data entry error. The functionality will include a built-in utility for respondents to complete and submit individual sections of the survey, and to examine/update previously submitted portions. It will also allow other maintenance and reporting capabilities. Since it is possible that some respondents will prefer to complete a paper version of the survey, this capability is also being provided.

For most of the numerical data collected, the data collection agent will primarily calculate totals, percentages, and perhaps cumulative percentages. In some cases, frequencies will be compiled and some distributional statistics will be calculated including means, medians, modes, and ranges.

3. Methods to Maximize Response Rates

Response rates will be maximized through email reminders after the initial contact. Where necessary, respondents will be contacted via telephone. This follow-up will be performed primarily by the data collection agent. The survey is the only existing source for complete and comprehensive data on the status of state-maintained criminal history records. As such, users at both the state and Federal levels have come to depend on its production on a regular basis to assess the effectiveness of programs designed to improve criminal record quality and to identify priorities for federal funding. It is the most cited publication produced by SEARCH and the survey is very popular among respondent agencies. As a result of the follow-up efforts, and due to the survey's popularity and importance, non-response has not been a significant issue. In a few exceptional cases, follow-up may be conducted by BJS if the data collection agent has not been successful in achieving a response.

Respondents will be asked to verify submitted responses, and will also be given the opportunity to review individual and compiled responses prior to publication.

4. Tests of Procedures

The changes made to the survey described in Part A, item 3 (“Efforts to Minimize Burden”) were developed and designed by SEARCH staff, in consultation with BJS. SEARCH staff, along with personal experience with prior iterations of the instrument, have extensive experience with state criminal record repository operations. The alterations to the instrument and its implementation derive from ongoing discussions and reviews with state criminal record repository staff. Comments and suggestions on the survey are routinely gathered by SEARCH staff through presentations based on survey results to SEARCH membership and at meetings of the FBI Criminal Justice Information Services Division Advisory Policy Board, its task forces, subcommittees, and regional working groups.

5. Contact information

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