

# History and Challenges of the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS)

By Timothy Kennel, Ph.D.

June 20, 2014

# Outline

1. Survey Design
2. History
3. Challenges

# SURVEY DESIGN

# Sample Design

- Sample Design:
  - Stratified
  - Two-stage cluster design
- Rotating panel design:
  - 7 panels
  - 6-month intervals
- Monthly Sample Size:
  - 10,500 cases

# Data Collection Methods

- Interview Mode:
  - Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI)
- First time interview:
  - Personal visit
- Subsequent interviews:
  - Phone (decentralized) when possible to save costs; personal visit if necessary

# Respondents and Reporting Periods

- Three types of respondents:
  - HH (18+)
  - Individual (12+)
  - Proxy (18+)
- Unit in sample 7 times over 3 years
- 6-month reference period

# Questionnaire Design

- NCVS-1: Screener Questionnaire:
  - Theft
  - Break-in (HH respondent only)
  - Vehicle (HH respondent only)
  - Attacked
  - Stolen/attacked by known person
  - Unwanted sexual activity
  - Catch Alls (Call police and did not call police)
- NCVS-2: Crime Incident Report:
  - Detailed questions on each incident reported in the screener
  - Information gathered to classify personal and property crimes

# HISTORY



# 1965 President's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice

- Uniform Crime Reporting Program (UCR)
  - Misses crimes not reported to police,
  - Lacks common definitions of crimes categories,
  - Insufficient details about characteristics of crimes,
  - Little information about victims, and
  - Little information on impact of crime on victims.
- Recommended a national victimization survey (1967)

# 1972 National Crime Survey

- Purpose
  - Develop detailed information about the victims and consequences of crime,
  - Estimate crimes not reported to the police,
  - Provide uniform measures of types of crimes, and
  - Permit comparisons over time and types of areas.

# 1976 National Academy of Science Recommendations

- Eliminate the commercial and central cities components,
- Revise the crime screening questions,
- Add questions about activities associated with crime victimization, and
- Add questions about preventive measures.

# 1992 National Crime Victimization Survey

- Name change
- 18 month phase-in period
- Screener revision to include prompts and improve recall of crimes
- Added questions on sexual assault and rape

# 2006 Sample Redesign

- Loss of Power
  - Cumulative effect of budget reductions
  - Declines in crime prevalence
  - Declining response rates
- New bounding method
- Shift from paper interviews to computer assisted interviews
- Temporary break in longitudinal estimates

# CHALLENGES

# Telescoping, Bounding, and Recall

- First interview
  - Prior to 2006 – Not used in estimation
  - After 2006 – Statistical adjustment is used to bound first interview
- Reference period
  - Current – 6 months
  - Proposed – 1 year

# State Estimation

- Added sample to 11 states in 2013
- Goal to produce 3 year rolling estimates of crime and victimization at the state level
- Reviewing and researching new weighting and variance estimation methods



# Budget

- Rising Field Costs
  - Declining response rates
- Interest in state-level estimation
- Restored funding after many sample reductions

# Underestimation of Rape and Sexual Assault

- Privacy
  - Current – Personal/telephone interview “within earshot” of others in household
  - Proposed – Self Response Module
- Context of crime survey
  - Current – Some respondents unlikely to report rape and sexual assault in a crime survey
  - Proposed – Collect rape and sexual assault reports in new health and wellbeing survey or supplement.
- Questionnaire wording
  - Current – Uses the word rape
  - Proposed – Ask about specific actions

# Questions?