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Document Title: National Crime Victimization Survey Redesign Letter and Incentive Experiment Report

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Abstract:

This report describes testing efforts to develop and assess a new National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) instrument. This testing was a part of the NCVS Instrument Redesign and Testing Project, a major multiyear effort to revamp the existing core survey instrument, which was last updated in 1992. The effort had three main goals: modernize the organization and content of the NCVS instrument, increase the quality of information collected and efficiency of the instrument flow, and improve the measurement and classification of crime. This report details findings from two experiments conducted as part of a large-scale national field test. The first experiment tested two different formats for letters sent to potential respondents, and the second experiment tested a promised incentive compared to no incentive to complete the questionnaire.

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NCVS Redesign Research and Development Program Report Series

The Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) maintains a robust research program geared toward assessing and improving the measurement of key criminal victimization estimates in the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) and its supplements. BJS has undertaken research in several areas to increase the efficiency, reliability, and utility of the NCVS. The *NCVS Instrument Redesign and Testing Project*, a major multiyear effort, is one such research and development effort. It is designed to revamp the existing core survey instrument, which was last updated in 1992.

The overarching objective of the project is to develop and assess a new instrument through a large-scale national field test. The project aims to modernize the core NCVS instrument, including improving the victimization screener and flow and logic of the instrument, as well as providing new measures of police performance and community safety and expanded measures of correlates of victimization and victim help-seeking.

This report describes findings from two experiments conducted as part of a large-scale national field test to assess the new NCVS instrument. The first experiment tested two different formats for letters sent to potential respondents, and the second experiment tested a promised incentive compared to no incentive to complete the questionnaire. The report details the methodology and findings from these two experiments.

This report and others developed under the NCVS Redesign Research and Development Program are part of BJS's efforts to finalize a new core survey instrument. Additional reports and findings from this effort may be found on the BJS webpage at <https://bjs.ojp.gov/programs/ncvs/instrument-redesign>.

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Executive Summary

This report describes the results of two experiments conducted as part of the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) Instrument Redesign and Testing Project (NCVS-R) Field Test, which was administered in late 2019 and early 2020. One experiment tested two different formats for advance letters sent to potential respondents: (1) a traditional paragraph-style letter, and (2) a more modern design with icons to highlight important points and increase readability. The letter experiment was applied to each of the three Field Test questionnaire conditions:

- The current NCVS questionnaire (Condition 1);
- The redesigned questionnaire (Condition 2); and
- The redesigned questionnaire with a self-administered component (Condition 3).

Addresses selected for each of the three questionnaire conditions were assigned to one of the two letter treatments for the “advance” letter, sent to households before an interviewer visited the address to complete the Household Roster Interview. Once the Roster Interview was completed, in Conditions 1 and 2 the interviewer immediately attempted to complete Person Interviews with everyone 12 or older in the household. In Condition 3, household members were sent a second letter, 2 months after the Roster Interview, inviting them to complete the Person Interview online. This “invitation letter” was also part of the letter experiment.

The second experiment described in this report tested a promised \$20 incentive against no incentive for respondents to complete the Condition 3 questionnaire online. The incentive experiment and letter experiments were fully crossed at the household level in Condition 3, for a total of eight experimental cells.

Results of Letter Experiment, Conditions 1 and 2

At the household level, there was little difference between the percentage of rosters completed by letter treatment in either Condition 1 or Condition 2. At the person level, there was no consistent pattern in the person-level response rates. None of the response rate comparisons between the letter treatments were statistically significant.

In the Condition 1 achieved sample (completed interviews), the icon letter sample had a higher proportion of non-Hispanic Black and Other Race¹ respondents and a lower proportion of non-Hispanic White respondents than the traditional letter sample. This pattern did not occur in the Condition 2 sample.

There is no conclusive evidence from these analyses for Conditions 1 and 2 supporting either the traditional or icon letter.

¹ “Other Race” includes the following categories from the Condition 1 and 2 questionnaires: American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and Other.

Results of Letter Experiment, Condition 3

Data collection for Condition 3 did not start until February 2020. All in-person data collection was suspended in mid-April 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic, when only 612 Condition 3 Roster Interviews had been completed, about 16 percent of the target. However, mail and email follow-up of members of all enumerated households was carried out as planned. Because of the truncated data collection period and the fact that the sample was worked unevenly across geographic areas, no weights were constructed for completed Condition 3 interviews, and no statistical tests were performed on the comparisons.

Among all Condition 3 addresses determined to be in scope (i.e., non-vacant dwelling units), 11.5 percent of icon letter households completed the Roster Interview, as compared with 9.6 percent of traditional letter households. Person Interview completion rates were similar for the icon letter and the traditional letter among household respondents (54.6% vs. 54.0%), but substantially higher for other adults (50.5% vs. 44.0%) and youth (47.1% vs. 35.5%). However, it is unlikely that the advance letter, which many of the other adults and youth probably never saw, is the main driver for these differences.

Overall, the Person Interview completion rate was higher for adults receiving the traditional invitation letter as opposed to the icon letter (56.5% vs. 52.1% for household respondents, 49.1% vs. 45.7% for other adults), while the completion rate for youth 12–17 was slightly higher for those receiving the icon invitation letter (42.4% vs. 41.1%).

Given the mixed results between the advance and invitation letters and the limitations caused by the truncated Condition 3 field period, the letter experiment results are inconclusive.

Results of Incentive Experiment, Condition 3

The advance letter, whether icon or traditional, mentioned the incentive if the household was in the incentive sample. Although the incentive did not apply to the Roster Interview, it may have motivated some respondents to complete the roster. Interviewers may also have mentioned the incentive in their efforts to persuade respondents. Among households receiving advance letters mentioning the incentive, 10.8 percent completed the Roster Interview as compared with 10.3 percent of households receiving letters that did not mention incentives.

At the person level, 61.2 percent of respondents in the incentive treatment completed the Person Interview online, as compared with 37.0 percent of those in the no incentive treatment. The differences were in the same direction and of comparable size for household respondents, other sampled adults, and youth 12–17.

One might expect monetary incentives to have more of an effect in lower-income households, which proved to be the case. Some 26.0 percent of incentive households reported annual incomes of less than \$30,000, as compared with 10.2 percent of no incentive households. The effect was larger in households receiving the traditional advance letter (25.5% vs. 7.1%) than in those receiving the icon advance letter (26.4% vs. 12.9%). Another way of viewing this result is that the icon letter seems to have appealed more to low-income households than the traditional letter in Condition 3.

Overall, the promised incentive had a large positive effect on Person Interview response, both in terms of the Person Interview completion rate and in terms of the composition of the achieved sample. Low-income households are typically harder to interview than others. The size of these effects may be less than what would have happened if the in-person portion of the Condition 3 field period had played out as planned.

1. Introduction

The National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) Instrument Redesign and Testing Project (NCVS-R) was a major multi-year effort to overhaul the existing NCVS survey instruments. It included a large national Field Test, conducted between October 2019 and May 2020. See *Update on the NCVS Instrument Redesign* (Truman and Brotsos, 2022)² for a description of the NCVS Redesign Program, and the Field Test Topline Report (Cantor et al, 2022)³ for a detailed description of and results from the Field Test. The design is summarized here.

The Field Test included a Household Roster (the NCVS Control Card), a Victimization Screener (NCVS-1), and a Crime Incident Report (CIR) (NCVS-2), completed for victimizations reported in the screener. The screener and CIR comprised the Person Interview, which had three experimental treatments:

- Condition 1 was the core NCVS, administered by field interviewers either in person or, in some cases, over the telephone, using a computer-assisted interview program.
- Condition 2 was a redesigned NCVS questionnaire, also administered by field interviewers in person or over the telephone, using a web-based questionnaire.
- Condition 3 used the same questionnaire as Condition 2, but after a field interviewer completed a Household Roster, household members age 12 or older were asked to complete the Person Interview themselves online. There was a 2-month gap between the Roster Interview and the invitation to complete the online survey.

The Field Test included two other experiments, which are the subjects of this report. The first tested two different formats of a letter sent to households, referred to as the “advance letter,” before the first contact by an interviewer. One format was a traditional paragraph-style letter, with Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) on the back. The second format was a more modern design with icons to highlight important points and increase the readability of the letter. This more modern design included the same FAQs on the back page as the traditional paragraph-style letter. Sampled households were randomly assigned to one of the two advance letter formats in both Condition 1 and Condition 2. Exhibits A-1 and A-2, in Appendix A, are the traditional advance letter for Conditions 1 and 2; the icon advance letters are Exhibits A-3 and A-4.

Advance letters have repeatedly been shown to have a positive effect on survey response, across all survey modes (in person, telephone, mail, and web) (see, for example, de Leeuw et al, 2007). Typically, however, experimental manipulations of advance letters not involving incentives have little or no effect on response rates, the composition of achieved samples, or estimates from survey data. And, of course, not every potential respondent will have seen (and remembered) a letter even if it reached the correct address in a timely manner.

² [Update on the NCVS Instrument Redesign | Bureau of Justice Statistics \(ojp.gov\)](#).

³ [National Crime Victimization Survey Redesign Field Test Topline Report: Comparing Condition 1 and Condition 2 by Interleaving Treatment | Bureau of Justice Statistics \(ojp.gov\)](#).

The second experiment tested a monetary incentive against no incentive in Condition 3. The Condition 3 advance letters differed from those for Conditions 1 and 2 in two ways: (1) they described the separation of the Roster and Person Interviews; and (2) they mentioned the Person Interview incentive for those households assigned to the incentive treatment. The Condition 3 traditional advance letters are Exhibit A-5 (incentive) and Exhibit A-6 (no incentive), Appendix A, while the icon letters are Exhibit A-7 (incentive) and Exhibit A-8 (no incentive).

Two months after the Roster Interview was completed, individuals age 12 or older were sent a letter inviting them to complete the Person Interview online. Persons in half of the Condition 3 households were promised a \$20 cash card if they completed the Person Interview. This invitation letter was also part of the experiment. Finally, the letters for adults and youth ages 12-17 were worded differently, so there are a total of 8 invitation letters. The Condition 3 traditional invitation letters are Exhibits A-9 through A-12, Appendix A, while the icon letters are Exhibits A-13 through A-16.

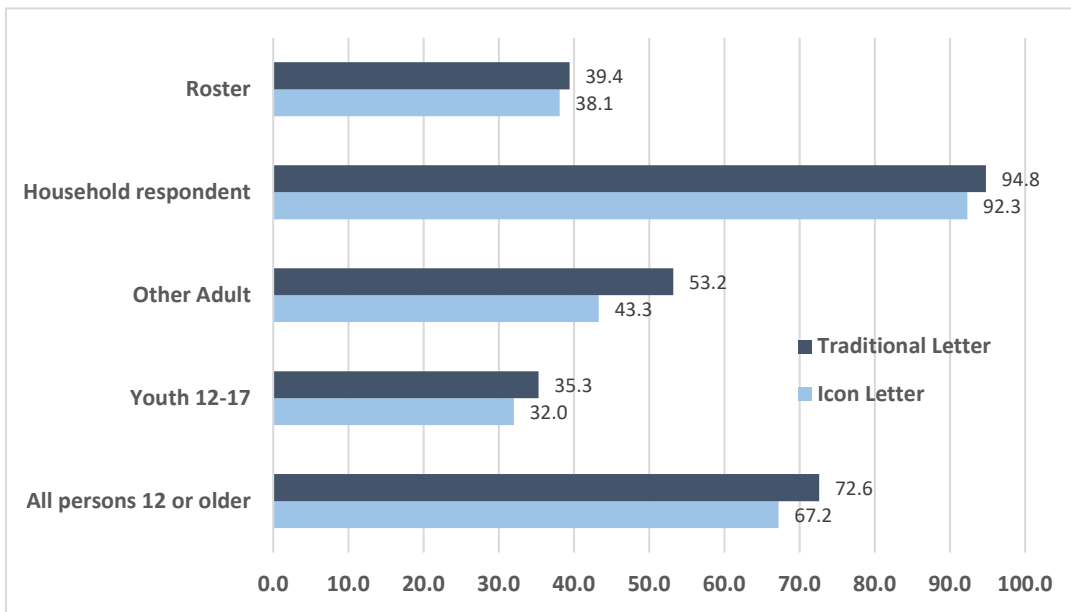
2. Letter Experiment, Conditions 1 and 2

This chapter will compare and discuss field completion rates, weighted response rates, and the demographic characteristics of the achieved samples for Conditions 1 and 2 by which advance letter the households received. The unweighted completion rates represent the data collection outcomes reported by the field staff. In processing, each returned record was assessed and a final result code assigned. Statisticians then computed survey weights based on the probabilities of selection and this result code. The weights used in calculating response rates took into consideration the sampled addresses determined not to be households and those for which there was no determination of household status. The weighted response rate for a set of sampled addresses, the Condition 1 sample, for example, is the sum of weights of the completed interviews divided by the sum of weights of the completed interviews and nonrespondents after these adjustments. Detailed data tables referenced in this section may be found in Appendix B.

2.1 Completion Rates, Conditions 1 and 2

Figures 2-1 and 2-2 show the unweighted completion rates for Condition 1 and 2, respectively, by letter treatment. See Table B-1, Appendix B, for additional detail. At the household level, there was little difference between the percentages of rosters completed by letter treatment in either condition. At the person level, completion rates among those receiving the traditional letter were higher for all comparisons: household respondents, other adults in the household, and youth ages 12 to 17. The differences were larger in Condition 1; the largest difference was for other Condition 1 adults, where 53.2 percent of those receiving the traditional letter responded as compared with 43.3 percent of those receiving the icon letter. Table B-1 also shows the mean number of persons enumerated in the Roster Interview, which was virtually identical across questionnaire conditions and letter treatments, at or just below 2.00 persons per household.

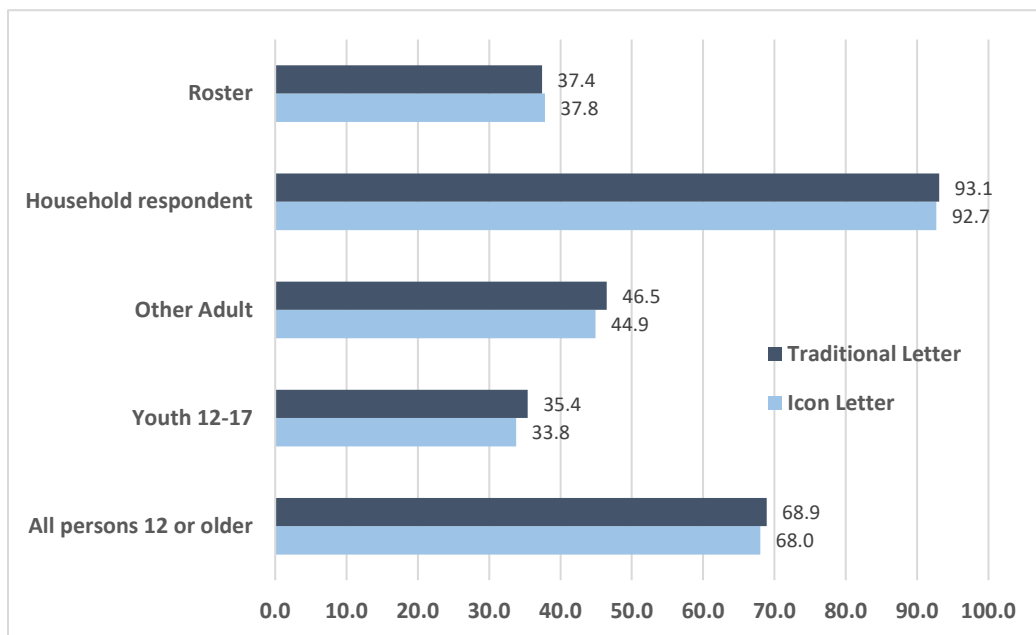
Figure 2-1. Completion rates (unweighted) for Household Roster and Person Interviews by letter treatment, Condition 1



Source: 2019-2020 NCVR-R Field Test.

For more detail, see Table B-1, Appendix B.

Figure 2-2. Completion rates for Household Roster (unweighted) and Person Interviews by letter treatment, Condition 2



Source: 2019-2020 NCVS-R Field Test.

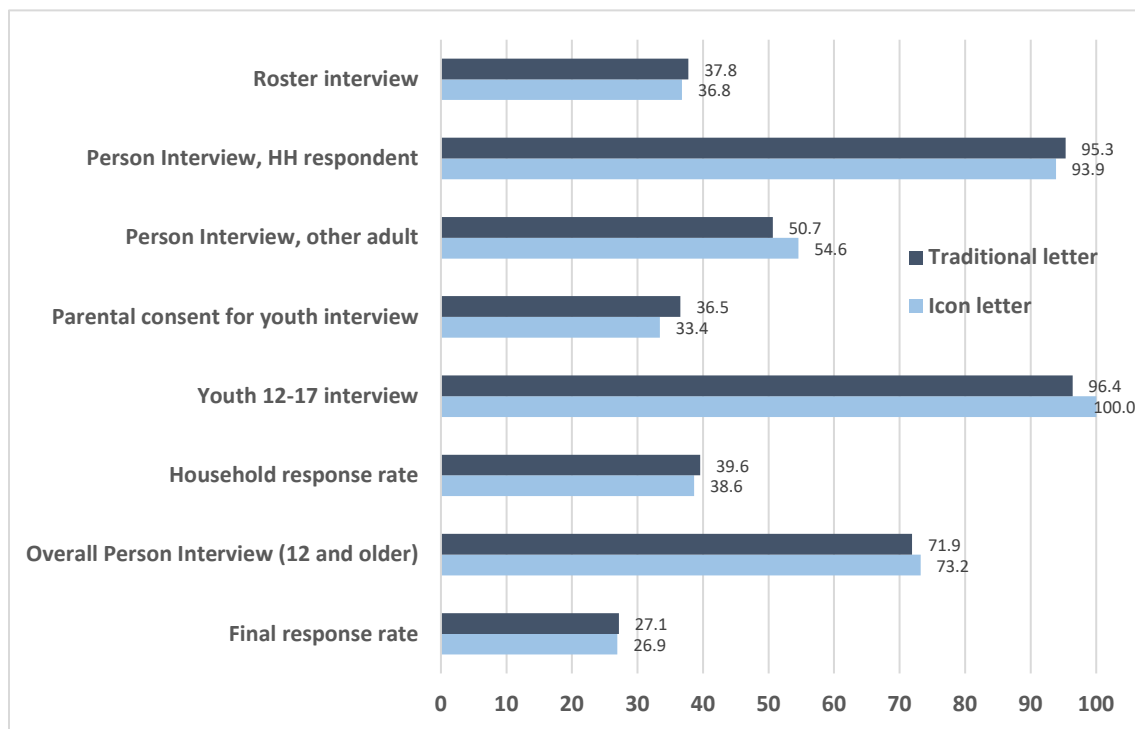
For more detail, see Table B-1, Appendix B.

2.2 Weighted Response Rates, Conditions 1 and 2

The weighted Household Roster and conditional Person Interview response rates are shown in Figures 2-3 and 2-4, for Condition 1 and Condition 2, respectively. See Tables B-2 and B-3, Appendix B, for additional detail. In both conditions, the Household Roster response rate, where one would most expect to see an effect from the advance letter, is slightly higher for the traditional letter (37.8% and 36.0%) than for the icon letter (36.8% and 35.6%), but the differences are not statistically significant. These numbers are very similar to the unweighted completion rates in Table B-1.

The weighted person-level response rates present a somewhat different picture than the completion rates, but none of the differences is significant. For the household respondent's Person Interview in Condition 1, the conditional response rate for the traditional letter is higher (95.3% vs. 93.9%), while in Condition 2, the icon letter conditional response rate is higher (92.7% vs. 92.1%). For the Condition 1 Person Interview with other adults in the household, the conditional response rate (Row 3) for the icon letter is higher in both conditions (54.5% vs. 50.6% Condition 1; 45.0% vs. 43.2% Condition 2). Parental consent was the major determinant of whether sampled youth completed the interview. The parental consent rate was higher for the traditional letter in both conditions (36.5% vs. 33.4% Condition 1; 35.7% vs. 34.7% Condition 2). The final response rates, combining all of the other components, were very similar between the letter treatments for both conditions.

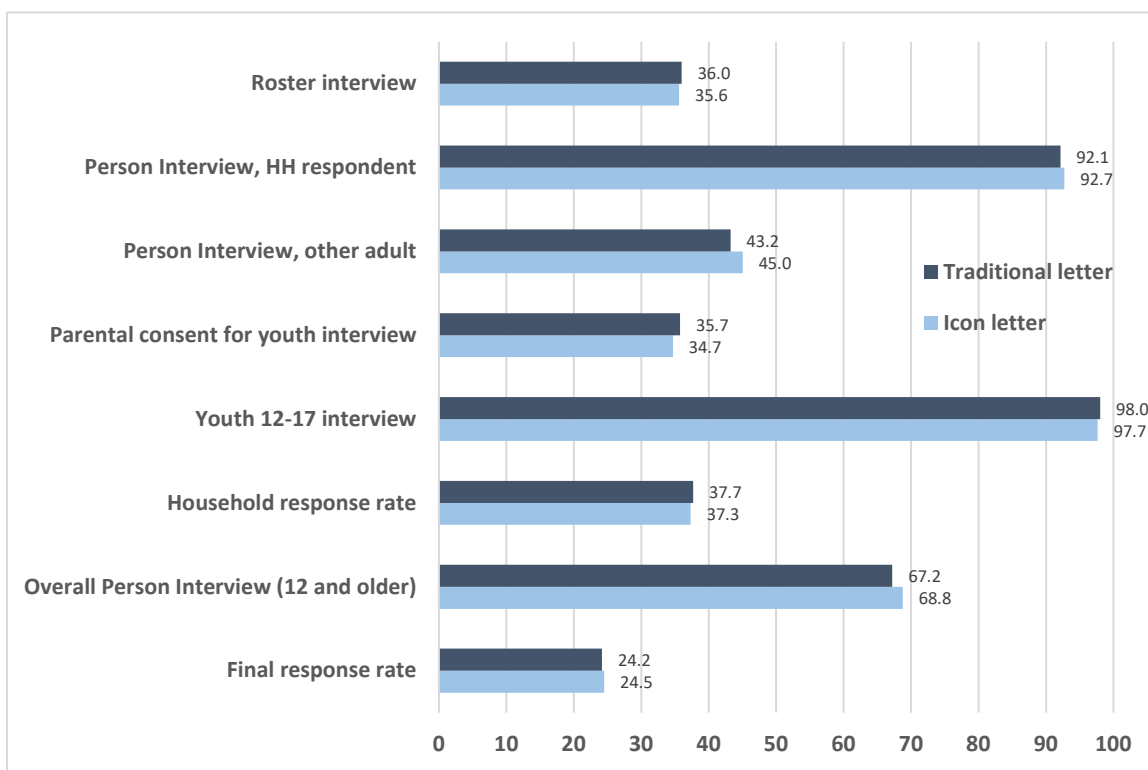
Figure 2-3. Weighted response rates for Household Roster and Person Interviews by letter treatment, Condition 1



Source: 2019-2020 NCVS-R Field Test.

For more detail, see Table B-2, Appendix B.

Figure 2-4. Weighted response rates for Household Roster and Person Interviews by letter treatment, Condition 2

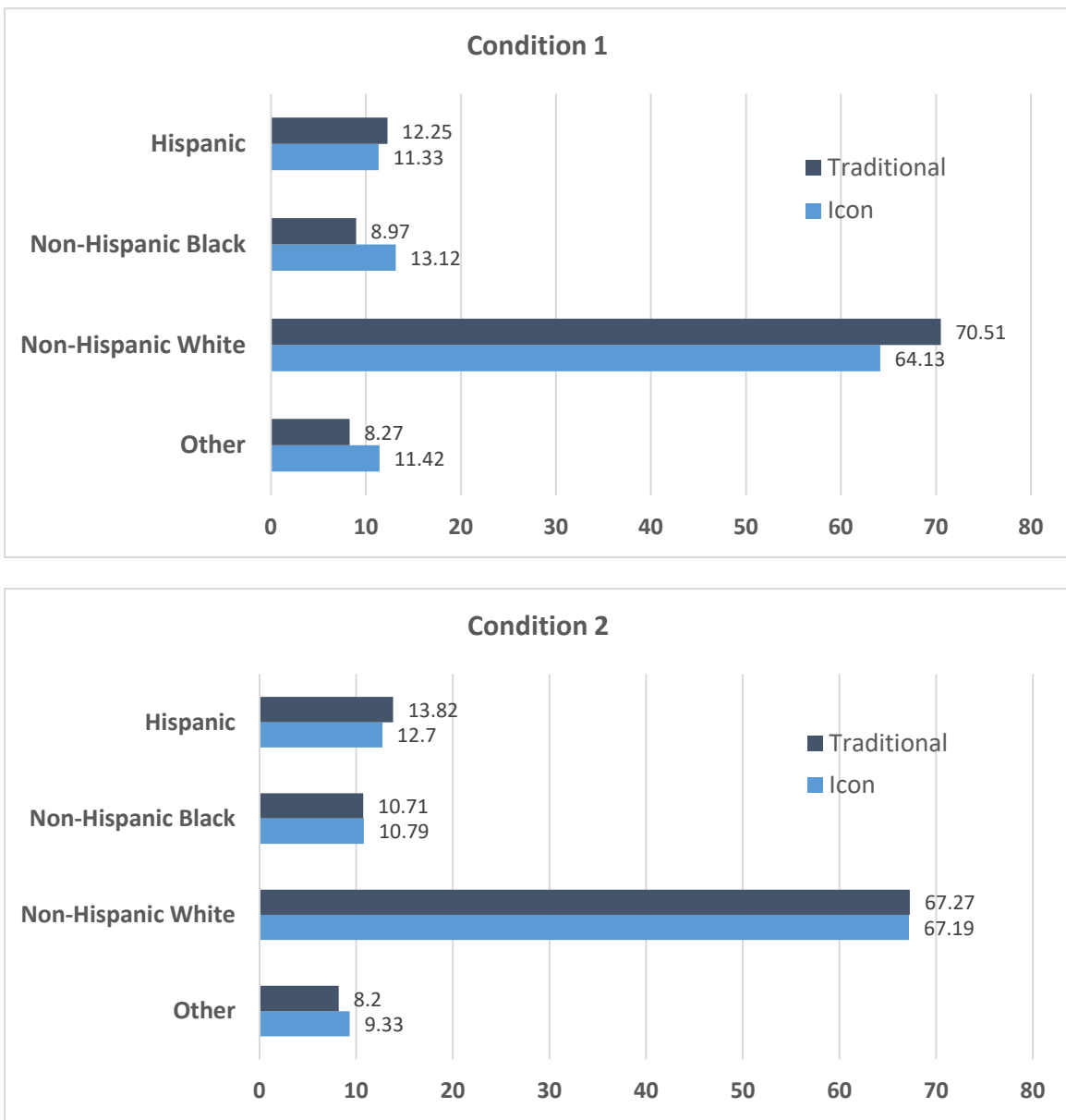


Source: 2019-2020 NCVS-R Field Test.
For more detail, see Table B-3, Appendix B.

2.3 Demographic Comparisons, Conditions 1 and 2

Table B-4, Appendix B, compares age, race/ethnicity, gender, and income distributions of the achieved Condition 1 and 2 samples (i.e., respondents) by letter treatment. Generally, the differences are small and not significant. The race/ethnicity distributions within Condition 1 are significantly different ($p < 0.05$), but the Condition 2 distributions are not. The race/ethnicity comparisons are also shown in Figure 2-5 for both Condition 1 and Condition 2. The Condition 1 icon letter sample includes more non-Hispanic Black persons (13.1% vs. 9.0%), more persons of Other Race (11.4% vs. 8.3%), and fewer non-Hispanic White persons (64.1% vs. 70.5%) than the traditional letter sample. These differences do not appear in the Condition 2 achieved sample or are much smaller. Within Condition 2, the icon letter sample skews slightly older ($p < 0.10$) than the traditional letter sample, but this is not the case for the Condition 1 sample.

Figure 2-5. Race/ethnicity distribution by letter treatment, Conditions 1 and 2



Source: 2019-2020 NCVS-R Field Test.
 For more detail, see Table B-4, Appendix B.

2.4 Discussion

The experiment discussed in this chapter compared a traditional letter in paragraph format with a letter covering the same information but using icons and a less dense format. The experiment was embedded in the NCVS-R Field Test, across three questionnaire conditions:

1. Current NCVS, interviewer-administered;
2. Redesigned NCVS, interviewer-administered; and
3. Redesigned NCVS, interviewer-administered, Roster Interview, and self-administered Person Interview 2 months later.

Only the first two conditions were addressed in this chapter. Condition 3 experiments are the subject of Chapter 3.

The first set of comparisons examined unweighted survey completion rates. At the household level, there was little difference between the percentage of rosters completed by letter treatment in either Condition 1 or Condition 2. At the person level, Condition 1 and 2 completion rates (unweighted) were consistently higher in households receiving the traditional letter. However, there was no consistent pattern in the second set of comparisons, across the Condition 1 and 2 weighted person-level response rates. None of the response rate comparisons between the letter treatments is statistically significant.

Comparing the demographic composition of the achieved samples, the Condition 1 sample from households receiving the icon letter was significantly different in race/ethnicity composition from the sample receiving the traditional letter, with higher proportions of non-Hispanic Black and Other Race individuals and a lower proportion of non-Hispanic White persons. This pattern did not occur in the Condition 2 sample, which suggests that the significant result may be an anomaly.

Overall, there is no clear evidence from these analyses supporting either the traditional or icon letter.

3. Incentive and Letter Experiments, Condition 3

Data collection for Condition 3 did not start until February 2020. All in-person data collection was suspended in mid-April 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic, when only 612 Condition 3 Roster Interviews had been completed, about 16 percent of the target. However, mail and email follow-up of members of all enumerated households was carried out as planned.

Condition 3 had three different experimental manipulations—incentive or no incentive; traditional or icon advance letter sent to households; and traditional or icon invitation letter sent to individuals—that were fully crossed, creating the eight experimental cells shown in Table 3-1. Each of these cells was assigned to approximately one-eighth of Condition 3 sampled households.

Table 3-1. Design of incentive and letter experiments, Condition 3

Cell	Incentive	Advance letter	Invitation letter
1	Yes	Traditional	Traditional
2	Yes	Traditional	Icon
3	Yes	Icon	Traditional
4	Yes	Icon	Icon
5	No	Traditional	Traditional
6	No	Traditional	Icon
7	No	Icon	Traditional
8	No	Icon	Icon

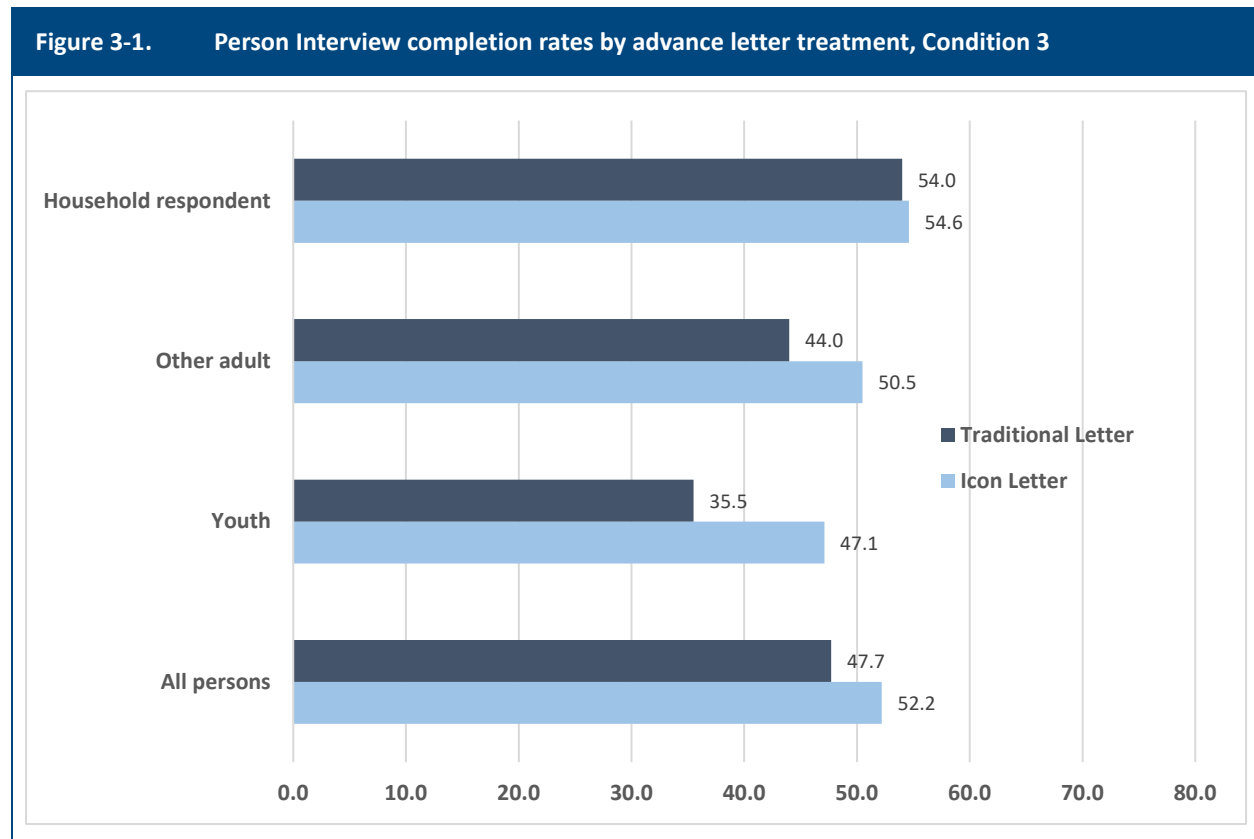
This chapter will present the results of these experiments individually and then will show the interactions. Because of the truncated data collection period and the fact that the sample was worked unevenly across geographic areas, no weights were constructed for completed Condition 3 interviews, and no statistical tests will be performed on the comparisons.

3.1 Advance Letter Experiment, Condition 3

Table B-5, Appendix B, shows the household-level data collection results for the letter experiment in Condition 3. Among all Condition 3 addresses determined to be in scope (i.e., non-vacant dwelling units), 11.5 percent of icon letter households completed the Roster Interview, as compared with 9.6 percent of traditional letter households. In the completed rosters, households receiving the icon letter listed an average of 2.06 persons 12 and older, as compared with 2.15 persons in traditional letter households. Both of these figures are higher than any of the Condition 1 or Condition 2 averages (all right around 2.00 persons), which suggests that households completing the roster in Condition 3 included fewer persons living alone than in Conditions 1 or 2. This difference is not surprising, given Condition 3's truncated field period and the fact that persons living alone are often more difficult to contact than multi-person households (e.g., Abbott and Compton, 2014).

The person-level results for Condition 3 by which letter was sent to the household are shown in Figure 3-1. For more detail, see Table B-6, Appendix B. Completion rates were similar for the icon letter and the traditional letter among household respondents (54.6% vs. 54.0%), but substantially higher for other adults (50.5% vs. 44.0%) and youth (47.1% vs. 35.5%) It is unlikely that the advance letter, which many of the other adults and youth probably never saw, is the main driver for

these differences since those persons received a separate invitation letter 2 months later that may have been in the other format. The truncated Condition 3 field period further complicates interpreting this difference.



Source: 2019-2020 NCVR-R Field Test.
For more detail, see Table B-6, Appendix B.

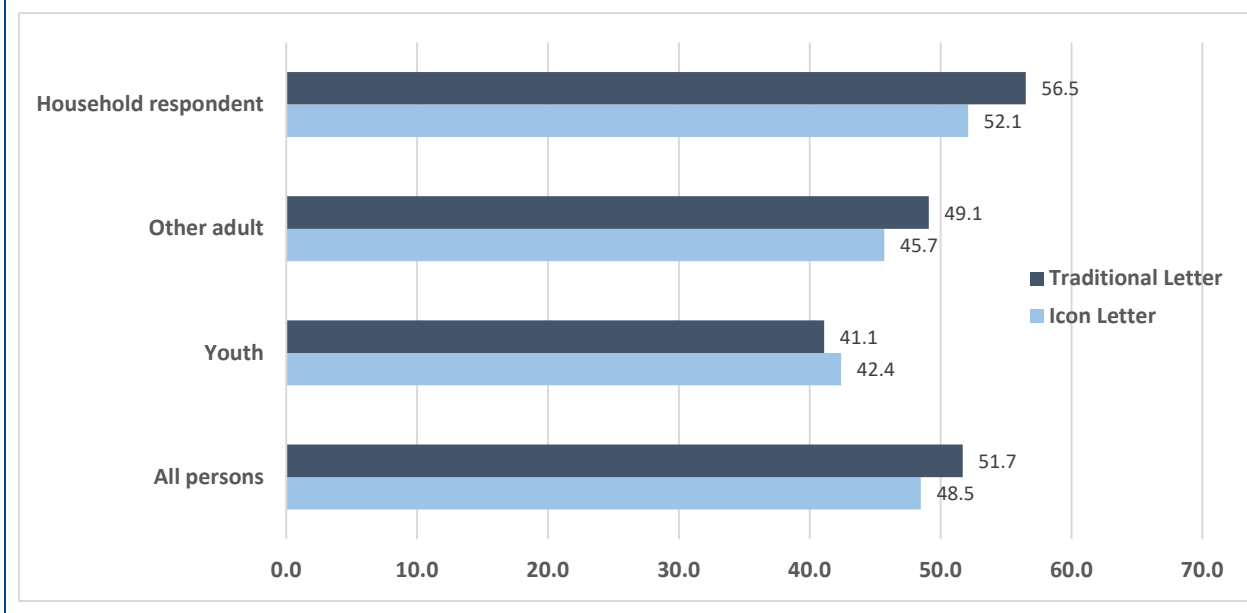
Table B-7, Appendix B, shows some person-level demographic breakdowns among Condition 3 households where the Roster Interview was completed. The differences by advance letter treatment are relatively small, and there is no particular pattern.

3.2 Invitation Letter Experiment, Condition 3

Two months after the Roster Interview was completed, household members age 12 or older were sent letters inviting them to complete the Person Interview online, either by U.S. Postal Service or email. Those not responding received further reminders over about a 2-month period. The invitation letters repeated the traditional and icon treatments, and the treatments were crossed with the advance letter treatments at the household level, e.g., persons in half of the traditional advance letter households received traditional invitation letters and those in the other half icon letters.

Table B-8, Appendix B, shows the Person Interview results by invitation letter treatment. The completion rates are presented in Figure 3-2. For household respondents and other adults, the traditional letter yielded somewhat higher completion rates, while for youth the icon letter had a slight edge. None of these differences are large, ranging from 2 to 4 percentage points.

Figure 3-2. Person Interview completion rates by invitation letter treatment, Condition 3



Source: 2019-2020 NCVS-R Field Test.
For more detail, see Table B-8, Appendix B.

Table B-9, Appendix B, shows the interaction of the advance and invitation letters in Person Interview results. For household respondents, the results by invitation letter are very similar across advance letter treatments: a modest advantage for the traditional invitation letter (55.8% vs. 52.1% for the traditional advance letter, 57.1 percent vs. 52.1 percent for the icon advance letter). For other adults and youth, there are larger differences, in each case favoring the invitation letter that matched the advance letter format.

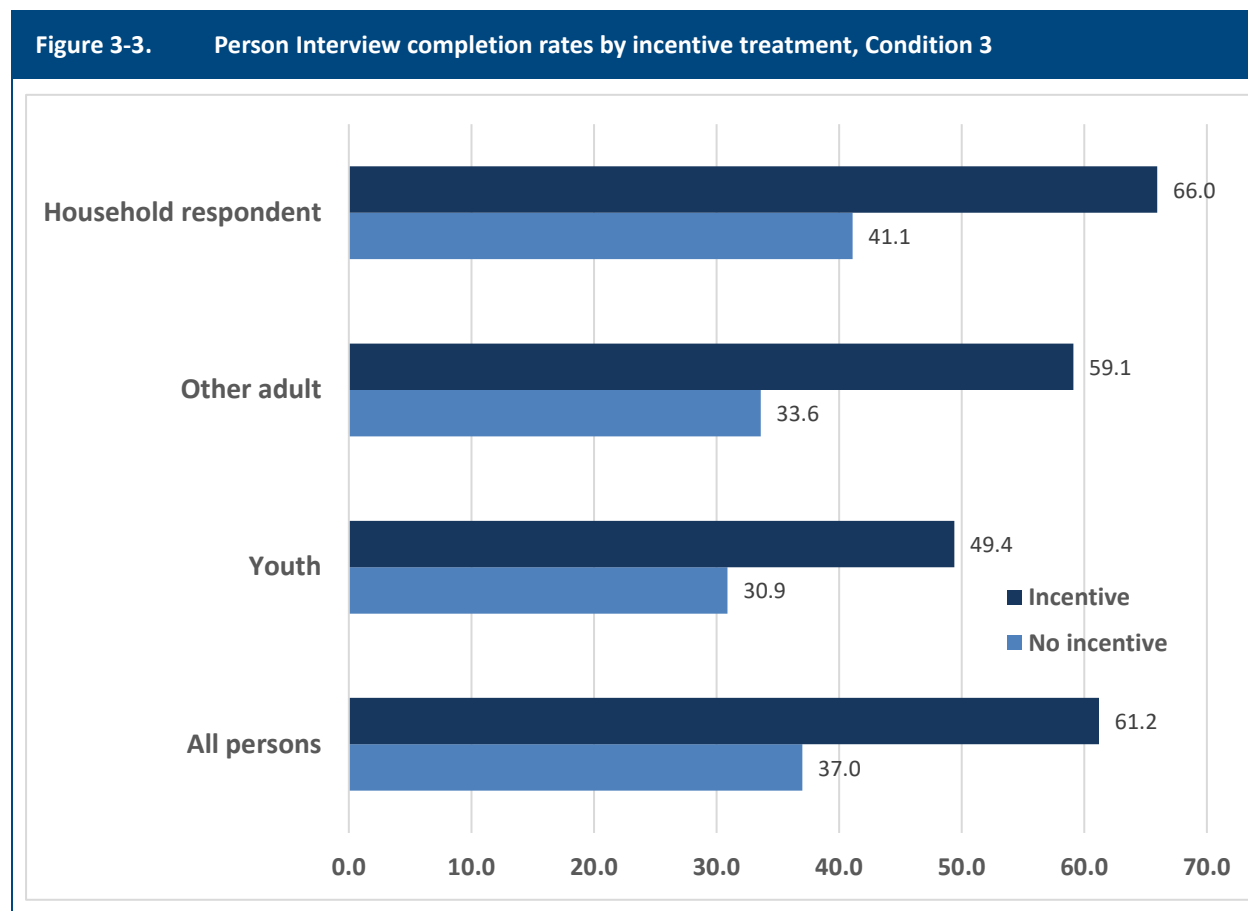
3.3 Incentive Experiment, Condition 3

Half of all persons 12 or older enumerated in the Condition 3 Roster Interview were offered a promised incentive (a \$20 cash card) to complete the Person Interview online. (No incentive was offered for the roster interview.) The incentive experiment was fully crossed with the two letter treatments in Condition 3.

Table B-10, Appendix B, assesses the effect of mentioning the incentive in the advance letter. Although the incentive did not apply to the Roster Interview, it may have motivated some respondents to complete the roster. Interviewers may also have mentioned the incentive in their efforts to persuade respondents. Among households receiving advance letters mentioning the incentive, 10.8 percent completed the Roster Interview as compared with 10.3 percent of households receiving letters that did not mention incentives (Table B-10).

Table B-11, Appendix B, shows the person-level results by incentive treatment, conditional on Roster Interview completion. The Person Interview completion rates are shown in Figure 3-3. As expected, the incentive had a large effect on Person Interview completion, across all respondent types, with differences of more than 30 percentage points for household respondents and other adults, and more than 20 points for youth. The planned in-person nonresponse follow-up was

canceled because of the pandemic. It would likely have reduced the gap some, but the full mail/email follow-up was completed for households completing the Roster Interview.



Source: 2019-2020 NCVS-R Field Test.
For more detail, see Table B-11, Appendix B.

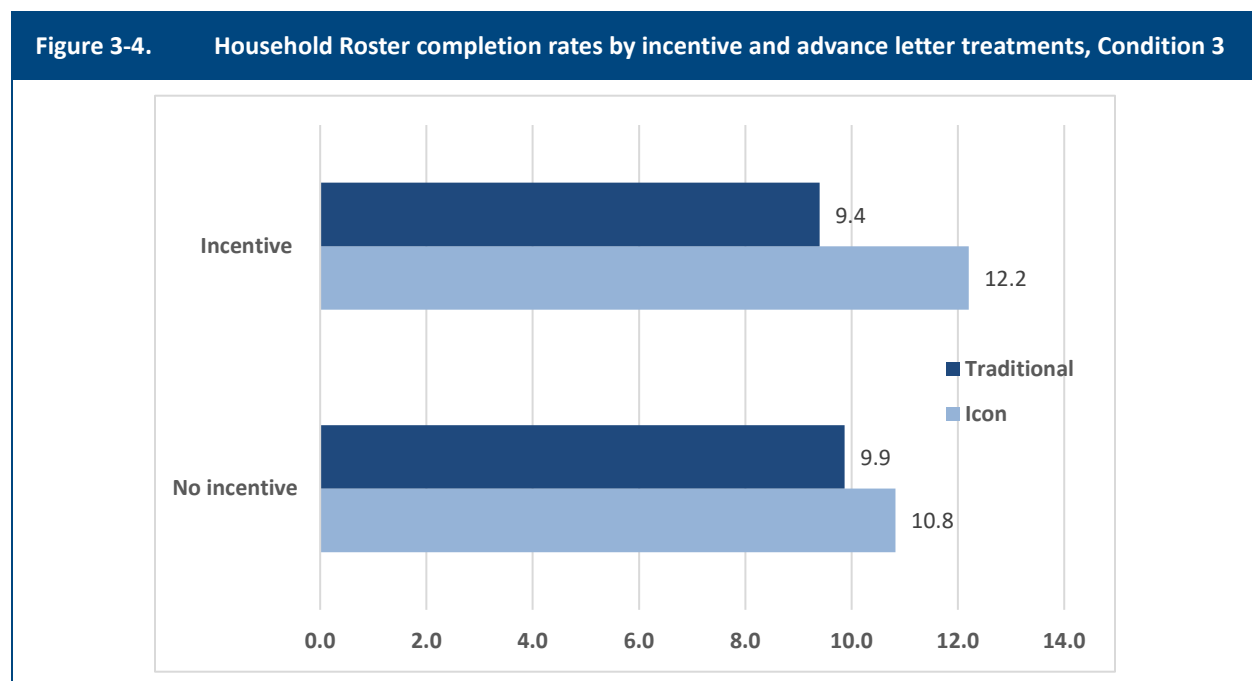
As noted earlier, another difference between the incentive and no incentive treatments is in the number of persons listed in the roster per household: 2.15 for the incentive treatment and 2.06 for the no incentive treatment (Table B-5, Appendix B). Among Condition 3 households completing the roster, from Tables B-5 and B-6 it is possible to calculate that those receiving advance letters mentioning the incentive listed an average of 0.91 other adults and 0.24 youths, while those receiving letters not mentioning an incentive listed an average of 0.87 other adults and 0.19 youths. It may be that knowing about the incentive led some household respondents to list other household members in the roster whom they would not have without it. The difference may also simply be due to chance.

There was no clear pattern of item nonresponse between the incentive and no incentive treatments. One exception is for household income. The Condition 3 no incentive treatment had about the same level of nonresponse to the initial income question (8.1%) and the follow-up for those earning \$30,000 per year or more (16.0%) as did the Condition 2 non-interleaved treatment (7.7% and 12.1%, respectively), while item nonresponse in the Condition 3 incentive treatment was much lower (3.7% and 5.2%). Given the relatively small sample sizes, these comparisons are only

suggestive. Further research would be necessary to determine whether there is an effect and which items it may apply to.

3.4 Interaction of Letter and Incentive Experiments, Condition 3

Table B-12 breaks out the Roster Interview results by incentive and advance letter treatments.⁴ The completion rates are shown in Figure 3-4. The icon letter yielded a higher completion rate for both incentive treatments, but the effect was larger in the incentive treatment (12.2% vs. 9.4% for the traditional letter). The mean number of persons enumerated per completed roster is highest for the incentive-traditional letter combination (2.23). The other means are 2.08 (incentive-icon), 2.07 (no incentive-traditional), and 2.05 (no incentive-icon) (Table B-12).

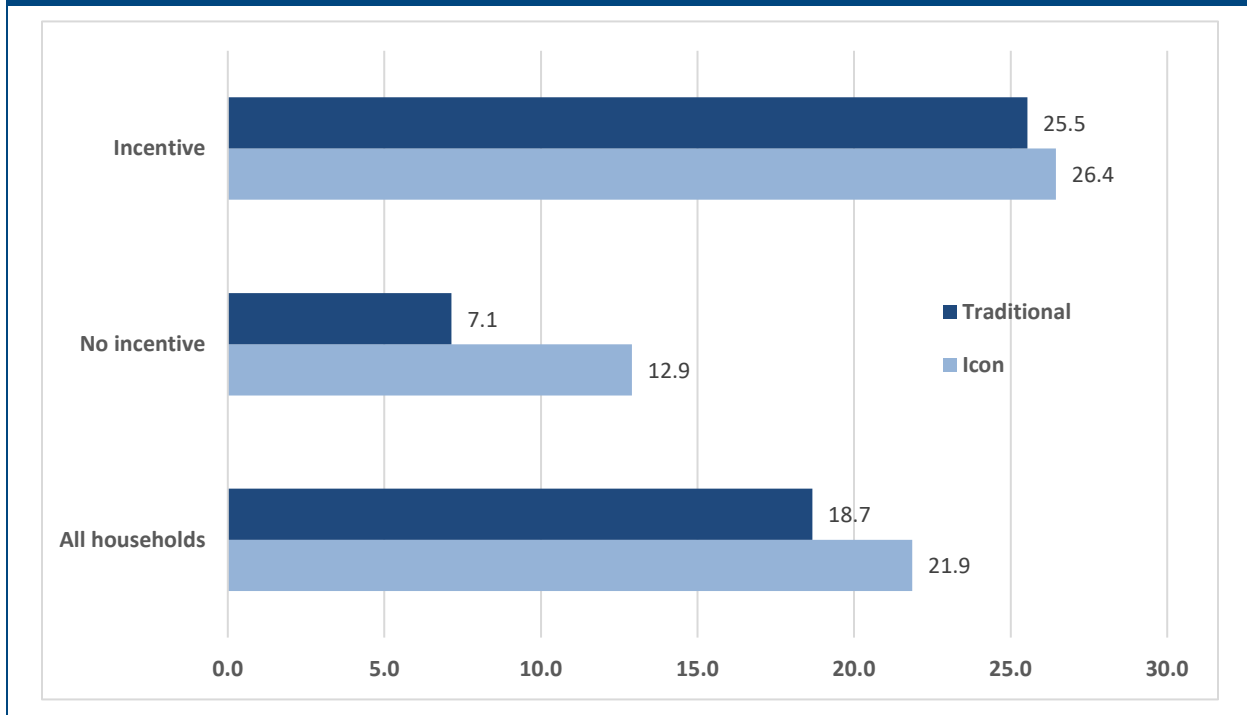


Source: 2019-2020 NCVS-R Field Test.
For more detail, see Table B-12, Appendix B.

Since monetary incentives may have more of an effect in lower-income households, the next analysis (Table B-13, Appendix B) looks at reported household income by incentive and advance letter treatments, summarized in Figure 3-5. Some 26.0 percent of incentive households reported annual incomes of less than \$30,000, as compared with 10.2 percent of no incentive households. As noted earlier, households receiving the icon letter were somewhat more likely to report annual income of less than \$30,000 than traditional letter households (21.9% vs. 18.7%). This effect was larger in the no incentive treatment (12.9% vs. 7.1%), reinforcing the possibility that the icon advance letter had a positive effect on participation in lower-income households.

⁴ Half of all persons 12 or older enumerated in the Condition 3 Roster Interview were promised a \$20 cash card to complete the Person Interview online. No incentive was offered for the roster interview.

Figure 3-5. Percentage of households with reported annual income under \$30,000, by incentive and advance letter treatments, Condition 3



Source: 2019-2020 NCVS-R Field Test.
For more detail, see Table B-13, Appendix B.

3.5 Discussion

The experiments discussed in this chapter compared the effects of a monetary incentive on completion of an in-person Household Roster survey followed by an online Person Interview 2 months later, Condition 3 of the NCVS-R Field Test. This experiment was fully crossed with another experiment comparing a traditional letter in paragraph format with a letter covering the same information but using icons and a less dense format. This letter experiment was embedded at both the household and person levels.

Condition 3 results are subject to several significant caveats:

- The data collection design, with a 2-month gap between the Roster Interview and the invitation to complete the Person Interview, was intended to simulate the gap between the NCVS time-in-sample interviews number one and two. It is highly unlikely that this design would ever be used for the production NCVS.
- Truncation of the field period for the COVID-19 pandemic severely limited in-person contact with sampled households; further, the Condition 3 sample was worked unevenly across geographic areas because it was fielded while Conditions 1 and 2 were still active.
- Because of the truncation of the field period, the achieved sample sizes were small, over-representing households who were easiest to contact. For these reasons, it was not feasible to construct sample-based survey weights or perform statistical tests.

Because of these limitations, any conclusions from the analyses of Condition 3 data presented here should be taken as suggestive at best.

In Condition 3, households receiving the icon advance letter were more likely to complete the Roster Interview than households receiving the traditional letter. The differences were 2.8 percentage points for households in the incentive treatment and 0.9 percentage points for the no incentive treatment. Condition 3 completion rates were much higher among “other adults” and youth in households receiving the icon letter than in households receiving the traditional letter.

It is possible that these differences in Condition 3 related to the advance letter represent an early-field period effect, since the Condition 3 field period was cut short, achieving only about a third of the response seen in Conditions 1 and 2. However, there was no evidence suggesting such an effect in Conditions 1 and 2.

Household respondents were 3–5 percentage points more likely to complete the Person Interview if they received the traditional individual invitation letter, regardless of whether the household had received the traditional or the icon advance letter. Other adults and youth, on the other hand, were 4 to 15 percentage points more likely to complete the Person Interview if they received an invitation letter in the same style as the household’s advance letter.

If the influence of the advance letter on person-level completion rates is a real effect, it is somewhat surprising given that (1) it is likely that many “other adults” and youth never saw the advance letter; (2) the advance letters had no information on how to access the web survey; and (3) the invitation letters came 2 months after the Roster Interview was completed. Thus, these differences are likely due to the caveats at the beginning of this section, not to real effects. At the very least, these results would need to be replicated with a sample that was fully worked.

The promised monetary incentive (a \$20 cash card) appeared to affect Household Roster completion rates, even though it only applied to the Person Interview. The advance letters mentioned the incentive, and interviewers may have mentioned it as well in incentive treatment households. The effect was larger for the icon letter (2.8 percentage points) than for the traditional letter (0.9 percentage points). The difference is relatively small, especially given the truncated field period.

The incentive had a large effect on Condition 3 person-level completion rates, with differences approaching or exceeding 20 percentage points, the largest difference being 25 percentage points for household respondents.

The effect of the incentive was strongly related to household income, which was reported by the household respondent within the Person Interview. More than one-quarter of incentive treatment households reported annual income of less than \$30,000, regardless of which advance letter they received; the rate among icon letter households was about 1 percentage point higher than among traditional letter households. Among no incentive households receiving the traditional letter, 7.1 percent reported income below \$30,000, as compared with 12.9 percent of households receiving the icon letter. Thus, the icon letter also seemed to affect the income distribution of the achieved sample, although not as strongly as the incentive.

4. Conclusions

The effect of the monetary incentive on Condition 3 Person Interview completion was clear and strong, as expected. It also appeared to affect Household Roster completion, although the effect was relatively small. The size of these effects may be different from what would have happened if the in-person portion of the Condition 3 field period had played out as planned. The incentive also had a strong effect on the income distribution in the achieved sample. Again, the size of this effect may be related to the truncated field period.

Even with this large effect, significant caveats are warranted. For example, an incentive may lead to responding earlier in the field period⁵. It is not uncommon for the effects of incentives to wane as the sample is worked more thoroughly, with multiple contacts. While the results of the incentive experiment are very consistent with prior studies, replicating this result with a full sample is important.

The results of the letter experiment are less clear-cut. In Conditions 1 and 2, there were no significant differences and no clear patterns in response rates by letter treatment. In Condition 3, the icon advance letter was associated with higher completion rates at both the household level and the conditional person level. There was little difference in the achieved sample composition by age or gender between the letter treatments in any of the questionnaire conditions; a difference by race/ethnicity in Condition 1 was not seen in either Condition 2 or 3. The most notable effect on the composition of the achieved sample was for income level in Condition 3. The incentive greatly increased the proportion of low-income households represented, and the icon letter seemed to have a similar but smaller effect. However, this effect was not observed in the Condition 1 or Condition 2 samples.

Overall, the letter experiment does not provide strong evidence for or against using an icon-style advance letter in the production NCVS. The Condition 3 results suggest a slight advantage for the icon letter, but their generalizability is unknown.

⁵ Unpublished results from the authors' research on monetary incentives.

References

- Abbott, O., and Compton, G. (2014). Counting and estimating hard-to-survey populations in the 2011 Census. In R. Tourangeau, B. Edwards, T.P. Johnson, K.M. Wolter, and N. Bates, (Eds.) *Hard-to-Survey Populations* (pp. 58-81). Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.
- de Leeuw, E., Callegaro, M., Hox, J., Korendijk, E., and Lensvelt-Mulders, G. (2007). The Influence of advance letters on response in telephone surveys: A meta-analysis. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 71(3), 413-443.

Appendix A

Advance Letters for Conditions 1, 2, and 3
Invitation Letters for Condition 3

Appendix A

Advance Letters for Conditions 1, 2, and 3

Invitation Letters for Condition 3

Exhibit A-1. Traditional advance letter, Condition 1



U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Justice Programs
Bureau of Justice Statistics
Washington, D.C. 20531

12345
<<CITY>> Resident
<<Address 1>>
<<Address 2>>
<<City>>, <<ST>> <<ZIP>>

January 2020

Dear <<CITY>> Resident,

I am writing to ask you to be part of an important national study sponsored by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, part of the U.S. Department of Justice.

Your address has been scientifically selected for the National Survey of Crime and Safety. Your address cannot be replaced. To make sure the results are statistically valid, only people at the selected addresses can take part in the survey. Your responses will represent thousands of households like yours.

The information you provide will give us a better understanding of people's experiences with crime and attitudes about neighborhood safety in the country. Even if you have not experienced a crime, your participation is important to help us understand these issues.

We have hired Westat, an independent research company, to conduct the NSCS. In the next week or two, a Westat interviewer (with a Westat ID) will come to your home to ask you and others to complete an interview. All adults and youth ages 12 and older are eligible to participate.

The information you provide will be used for statistical purposes only and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose as required by law (Title 34, U.S. Code, Section 10134). Your responses will be combined with those of others to produce statistical summaries about crime and safety that communities can use to help improve the effectiveness of law enforcement, help schools measure school victimization and help employers understand more about violence in the workplace.

Answers to frequently asked questions are included on the back of this letter. The Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) is authorized to conduct this survey under Title 34, U.S. Code, Section 10132. If you would like further information or to set an appointment for an interview, you can contact NSCS Survey Support at 1-855-849-6119. You can also visit the BJS website at www.bjs.gov/content/hscs.cfm or email any questions or concerns to NSCS@westat.com.

Crime and safety affect all Americans. Thank you for your generous cooperation. The Bureau of Justice Statistics appreciates your help in this very important survey.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Jeffrey H. Anderson in black ink.

Jeffrey H. Anderson
Director
Bureau of Justice Statistics
U.S. Department of Justice

cit

Exhibit A-2. Traditional advance letter, Condition 2



U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Justice Programs
Bureau of Justice Statistics
Washington, D.C. 20531

12345
<<CITY>> Resident
<<Address 1>>
<<Address 2>>
<<City>>, <<ST>> <<ZIP>>

January 2020

Dear <<CITY>> Resident,

I am writing to ask you to be part of an important national study sponsored by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, part of the U.S. Department of Justice.

Your address has been scientifically selected for the National Survey of Crime and Safety. Your address cannot be replaced. To make sure the results are statistically valid, only people at the selected addresses can take part in the survey. Your responses will represent thousands of households like yours.

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The information you provide will be used for statistical purposes only and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose as required by law (Title 34, U.S. Code, Section 10134). Your responses will be combined with those of others to produce statistical summaries about crime and safety that communities can use to help improve the effectiveness of law enforcement, help schools measure school victimization and help employers understand more about violence in the workplace.

Answers to frequently asked questions are included on the back of this letter. The Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) is authorized to conduct this survey under Title 34, U.S. Code, Section 10132. If you would like further information or to set an appointment for an interview, you can contact NSCS Survey Support at 1-855-849-6119. You can also visit the BJS website at www.bjs.gov/content/hscs.cfm or email any questions or concerns to NSCS@westat.com.

Crime and safety affect all Americans. Thank you for your generous cooperation. The Bureau of Justice Statistics appreciates your help in this very important survey.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey H. Anderson
Director
Bureau of Justice Statistics
U.S. Department of Justice

C2t



U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Justice Programs
Bureau of Justice Statistics
Washington, D.C. 20531

January 2020

Dear <<CITY>> Resident,



Why did I receive this letter?

Your address has been scientifically selected to take part in the **National Survey of Crime and Safety (NSCS)**.

Your address cannot be replaced. To make sure the results are statistically valid, only people at the selected addresses can take part in the survey.



What is the NSCS?

The NSCS asks about people's experiences with crime in the last 12 months. For more details, please see www.bjs.gov/content/nscs.cfm.



Who developed the NSCS?

The NSCS was developed by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), a part of the U.S. Department of Justice, with assistance from Westat, a social science research company.



What should I expect?

1. A Westat Interviewer (with a Westat ID) will come to your home.
2. They will ask a few questions about the people who live at this address.
3. All household members age 12 or older will be asked to complete the survey.



What do I do now?

Before the interviewer visits, you can call **1-855-849-6119** or send an email to NSCS@westat.com to schedule an appointment at a time that is convenient for you. For most people, the interview will take between 20 and 40 minutes.



Why should I participate?

- **Help your community.** Communities can use these data to help improve the effectiveness of local law enforcement.
- **Help schools.** The U.S. Department of Education can use these data to measure the prevalence of school victimization.
- **Help employers.** The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services can use these data to understand violence in the workplace.



Confidential and Private

Your confidentiality is ensured by law. The information you provide will be used for statistical purposes only and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose as required by law (Title 34, U.S. Code, Section 10231).

Thank you for participating in this important research study.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey H. Anderson
Director
Bureau of Justice Statistics
U.S. Department of Justice

cti



U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Justice Programs
Bureau of Justice Statistics
Washington, D.C. 20531

January 2020

Dear <<CITY>> Resident,



Why did I receive this letter?

Your address has been scientifically selected to take part in the **National Survey of Crime and Safety (NSCS)**.

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Thank you for participating in this important research study.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey H. Anderson
Director
Bureau of Justice Statistics
U.S. Department of Justice

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U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Justice Programs
Bureau of Justice Statistics
Washington, D.C. 20531



January 2020

<<City>> Resident
Address 1
Address 2
City, ST ZIP

Dear <<City>> Resident,

I am writing to ask you to be part of an important national study sponsored by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, part of the U.S. Department of Justice.

Your address has been scientifically selected for the National Survey of Crime and Safety. Your address cannot be replaced. To make sure the results are statistically valid, only people at the selected addresses can take part in the survey. Your responses will represent thousands of households like yours.

The information you provide will give us a better understanding of people's experiences with crime and attitudes about neighborhood safety in the country. Even if you have not experienced a crime, your participation is important to help us understand these issues.

We have hired Westat, an independent research company, to conduct the NSCS. In the next week or two, a Westat interviewer (with a Westat ID) will come to your home to ask you and others to complete an interview. In a few weeks, we will invite all household members age 12 and older to take another survey online. **Each household member who completes the online survey will receive a \$20 Visa gift card.**

The information you provide will be used for statistical purposes only and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose as required by law (Title 34, U.S. Code, Section 10134). Your responses will be combined with those of others to produce statistical summaries about crime and safety that communities can use to help improve the effectiveness of law enforcement, help schools measure school victimization and help employers understand more about violence in the workplace.

Answers to frequently asked questions are included on the back of this letter. The Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) is authorized to conduct this survey under Title 34, U.S. Code, Section 10132. If you would like further information or to set an appointment for an interview, you can contact NSCS Survey Support at 1-855-849-6119. You can also visit the BJS website at www.bjs.gov/content/nscs.cfm or email any questions or concerns to NSCS@westat.com.

Crime and safety affect all Americans. Thank you for your generous cooperation. The Bureau of Justice Statistics appreciates your help in this very important survey.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey H. Anderson
Director
Bureau of Justice Statistics
U.S. Department of Justice

C3ti



U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Justice Programs
Bureau of Justice Statistics
Washington, D.C. 20531



January 2020

<<City>> Resident
Address 1
Address 2
City, ST ZIP

Dear <<City>> Resident,

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Sincerely,

Jeffrey H. Anderson
Director
Bureau of Justice Statistics
U.S. Department of Justice

C3t



U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Justice Programs
Bureau of Justice Statistics
Washington, D.C. 20531

January 2020

Dear <<City>> Resident,



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What is the NSCS?

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Who developed the NSCS?

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What should I expect?

1. A Westat Interviewer (with a Westat ID) will come to your home.
2. They will ask a few questions about the people who live at this address.
3. In a few weeks, all household members age 12 and older will be asked to take an online survey. **Each household member who completes the online survey will receive a \$20 Visa gift card.**



What do I do now?

Before the interviewer visits, you can call **1-855-849-6119** or send an email to NSCS@westat.com to schedule an appointment at a time that is convenient for you. For most people, the interview will take between 5 and 10 minutes.



Why should I participate?

- **Help your community.** Communities can use these data to help improve the effectiveness of local law enforcement.
- **Help schools.** The U.S. Department of Education can use these data to measure the prevalence of school victimization.
- **Help employers.** The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services can use these data to understand violence in the workplace.



Confidential and Private

Your confidentiality is ensured by law. The information you provide will be used for statistical purposes only and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose as required by law (Title 34, U.S. Code, Section 10231).

Thank you for participating in this important research study.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey H. Anderson
Director
Bureau of Justice Statistics
U.S. Department of Justice

C3ii



U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Justice Programs
Bureau of Justice Statistics
Washington, D.C. 20531

January 2020

Dear <<City>> Resident,



Why did I receive this letter?

Your address has been scientifically selected to take part in the **National Survey of Crime and Safety (NSCS)**. **Your address cannot be replaced.** To make sure the results are statistically valid, only people at the selected addresses can take part in the survey.



What is the NSCS?

The NSCS asks about people's experiences with crime in the last 12 months. It also asks people's opinions about neighborhood safety and the local police. For more details, please see www.bjs.gov/content/hscs.cfm.



Who developed the NSCS?

The NSCS was developed by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), a part of the U.S. Department of Justice, with assistance from Westat, an independent research company.



What should I expect?

1. A Westat Interviewer (with a Westat ID) will come to your home.
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What do I do now?

Before the interviewer visits, you can call **1-855-849-6119** or send an email to NSCS@westat.com to schedule an appointment at a time that is convenient for you. For most people, the interview will take between 5 and 10 minutes.



Why should I participate?

- **Help your community.** Communities can use these data to help improve the effectiveness of local law enforcement.
- **Help schools.** The U.S. Department of Education can use these data to measure the prevalence of school victimization.
- **Help employers.** The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services can use these data to understand violence in the workplace.



Confidential and Private

Your confidentiality is ensured by law. The information you provide will be used for statistical purposes only and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose as required by law (Title 34, U.S. Code, Section 10231).

Thank you for participating in this important research study.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey H. Anderson
Director
Bureau of Justice Statistics
U.S. Department of Justice

CSI



U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Justice Programs
Bureau of Justice Statistics
Washington, D.C. 20531



March 2020

<<First>> <<Last>>
Address 1
Address 2
City, ST ZIP

Dear <<First>> <<Last>>,

I am writing to ask you to be part of an important national study sponsored by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, part of the U.S. Department of Justice. An interviewer came to your home a few weeks ago for the **National Survey of Crime and Safety (NSCS)**. You were listed as a household member, so we are now asking you to participate in this survey. After you complete the survey, you can enter a code to receive **\$20 on the Visa debit card** included in this mailing.

To participate in the survey, go to www.NSCS2020.org.

Your PIN access code is: <<XXXXXXXX>>.

If you have technical difficulties, you may call the NSCS Support team at 1 855-849-6119 or send an email to NSCS@westat.com. Your participation is important because your responses will represent thousands of other people like you.

The information you provide will give us a better understanding of people's experiences with crime and attitudes about neighborhood safety in the country. Even if you have not experienced a crime, your participation is important to help us understand these issues.

The information you provide will be used for statistical purposes only and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose, as required by law (Title 34 U.S.C. §10134). Your responses will be combined with those of others to produce statistical summaries about crime and safety.

You will find answers to frequently asked questions on the back of this letter. Title 34, U.S. Code, Section 10132 of the Justice Systems Improvement Act of 1979 authorizes the Bureau of Justice Statistics to conduct this survey. If you would like further information, you can visit the BJS website at www.bjs.gov/content/nscs.cfm.

Crime and safety affect all Americans. Thank you for your generous cooperation. The Bureau of Justice Statistics appreciates your help in this very important survey.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey H. Anderson
Director
Bureau of Justice Statistics
U.S. Department of Justice

C3tia

Exhibit A-10. Traditional invitation letter to youth, incentive treatment, Condition 3



U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Justice Programs
Bureau of Justice Statistics
Washington, D.C. 20531

March 2020



<<First>> <<Last>>
Address 1
Address 2
City, ST ZIP

Dear <<First>> <<Last>>,

I am writing to ask you to be part of an important national study sponsored by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, part of the U.S. Department of Justice. An interviewer came to your home a few weeks ago for the **National Survey of Crime and Safety (NSCS)**. Your parent or guardian gave us permission to ask you to participate in the survey. After you complete the survey, you can enter a code to receive **\$20 on the Visa debit card** included in this mailing.

To participate in the survey, go to www.NSCS2020.org.

Your PIN access code is: <<XXXXXXXX>>.

If you have technical difficulties, you may call the NSCS Support team at 1 855-849-6119 or send an email to NSCS@westat.com. Your participation is important because your responses will represent thousands of other people like you.

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Sincerely,

Jeffrey H. Anderson
Director
Bureau of Justice Statistics
U.S. Department of Justice

C3tiy

Exhibit A-11. Traditional invitation letter to adults, no incentive treatment, Condition 3



U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Justice Programs
Bureau of Justice Statistics
Washington, D.C. 20531



March 2020

<<First>> <<Last>>
Address 1
Address 2
City, ST ZIP

Dear <<First>> <<Last>>,

I am writing to ask you to be part of an important national study sponsored by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, part of the U.S. Department of Justice. An interviewer came to your home a few weeks ago for the **National Survey of Crime and Safety (NSCS)**. You were listed as a household member, so we are now asking you to participate in this survey.

To participate in the survey, go to www.NSCS2020.org.

Your PIN access code is: <<XXXXXXXX>>.

If you have technical difficulties, you may call the NSCS Support team at 1 855-849-6119 or send an email to NSCS@westat.com. Your participation is important because your responses will represent thousands of other people like you.

The information you provide will give us a better understanding of people's experiences with crime and attitudes about neighborhood safety in the country. Even if you have not experienced a crime, your participation is important to help us understand these issues.

The information you provide will be used for statistical purposes only and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose, as required by law (Title 34 U.S.C. §10134). Your responses will be combined with those of others to produce statistical summaries about crime and safety.

You will find answers to frequently asked questions on the back of this letter. Title 34, U.S. Code, Section 10132 of the Justice Systems Improvement Act of 1979 authorizes the Bureau of Justice Statistics to conduct this survey. If you would like further information, you can visit the BJS website at www.bjs.gov/content/nscs.cfm.

Crime and safety affect all Americans. Thank you for your generous cooperation. The Bureau of Justice Statistics appreciates your help in this very important survey..

Sincerely,

Jeffrey H. Anderson
Director
Bureau of Justice Statistics
U.S. Department of Justice

C3t_a

Exhibit A-12. Traditional invitation letter to youth, no incentive treatment, Condition 3



U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Justice Programs
Bureau of Justice Statistics
Washington, D.C. 20531



March 2020

<<First>> <<Last>>
Address 1
Address 2
City, ST ZIP

Dear <<First>> <<Last>>,

I am writing to ask you to be part of an important national study sponsored by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, part of the U.S. Department of Justice. An interviewer came to your home a few weeks ago for the **National Survey of Crime and Safety (NSCS)**. Your parent or guardian gave us permission to ask you to participate in the survey.

To participate in the survey, go to www.NSCS2020.org.

Your PIN access code is: <<XXXXXXXX>>.

If you have technical difficulties, you may call the NSCS Support team at 1 855-849-6119 or send an email to NSCS@westat.com. Your participation is important because your responses will represent thousands of other people like you.

The information you provide will give us a better understanding of people's experiences with crime and attitudes about neighborhood safety in the country. Even if you have not experienced a crime, your participation is important to help us understand these issues.

The information you provide will be used for statistical purposes only and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose, as required by law (Title 34 U.S.C. §10134). Your responses will be combined with those of others to produce statistical summaries about crime and safety.

You will find answers to frequently asked questions on the back of this letter. Title 34, U.S. Code, Section 10132 of the Justice Systems Improvement Act of 1979 authorizes the Bureau of Justice Statistics to conduct this survey. If you would like further information, you can visit the BJS website at www.bjs.gov/content/hscs.cfm.

Crime and safety affect all Americans. Thank you for your generous cooperation. The Bureau of Justice Statistics appreciates your help in this very important survey.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey H. Anderson
Director
Bureau of Justice Statistics
U.S. Department of Justice

C3T.y



U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Justice Programs
Bureau of Justice Statistics
Washington, D.C. 20531

March 2020

Dear <<First>> <<Last>>,

You are invited to participate in the **National Survey of Crime and Safety (NSCS)**. An interviewer came to your address a few weeks ago and you were listed as a household member. It's now your turn to take the survey. After you complete the survey, you can enter a code to receive \$20 on the Visa debit card included in this mailing.



Why did I receive this letter?

You cannot be replaced by someone else. To make sure the results are statistically valid, only you are able to use the PIN code below.

**To participate in the survey, go to www.NSCS2020.org.
Your PIN access code is: <<XXXXXXXX>>**



What do I do now?

Technical Difficulties? Call the NSCS Support team at Westat at 1 855-849-6119 or send an email to NSCS@westat.com.



What is the NSCS?

The NSCS asks about people's experiences with crime in the last 12 months. It also asks people's opinions about neighborhood safety and the local police. For more details, please see www.bjs.gov/content/nscs.cfm.



Why should I participate?

- **Help your community.** Communities can use these data to help improve the effectiveness of local law enforcement.
- **Help schools.** The U.S. Department of Education can use these data to understand and help prevent school victimization.
- **Help employers.** The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services can better understand violence in the workplace.



What should I expect?

1. The survey will take about 20 to 40 minutes, depending on your experiences.
2. If you do not complete the survey, we will send a reminder and re-send the link, or an interviewer may visit your home.
3. If you do not have a way to complete the survey, an interviewer can visit with a computer you can use.

Thank you for participating in this important research study.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey H. Anderson
Director
Bureau of Justice Statistics
U.S. Department of Justice

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U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Justice Programs
Bureau of Justice Statistics
Washington, D.C. 20531

March 2020

Dear <<First>> <<Last>>,



Why did I receive this letter?

You are invited to participate in the **National Survey of Crime and Safety (NSCS)**. An interviewer came to your address a few weeks ago and your parent or guardian gave us permission to ask you to participate. Now it's your turn to take the survey! After you complete the survey, you can enter a code to receive \$20 on the Visa debit card included in this mailing.

You cannot be replaced by someone else. To make sure the results are statistically valid, only you are able to use the PIN code below.



What do I do now?

**To participate in the survey, go to www.NSCS2020.org.
Your PIN access code is: <<XXXXXXXX>>**

Technical Difficulties? Call the NSCS Support team at Westat at 1 855-849-6119 or send an email to NSCS@westat.com.



What is the NSCS?

The NSCS asks about people's experiences with crime in the last 12 months. It also asks people's opinions about neighborhood safety and the local police. For more details, please see www.bjs.gov/content/nscs.cfm.



Why should I participate?

- **Help your community.** Communities can use these data to help improve the effectiveness of local law enforcement.
- **Help schools.** The U.S. Department of Education can use these data to understand and help prevent school victimization.
- **Help employers.** The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services can better understand violence in the workplace.



What should I expect?

1. The survey will take about 20 to 40 minutes, depending on your experiences.
2. If you do not complete the survey, we will send a reminder and re-send the link, or an interviewer may visit your home.
3. If you do not have a way to complete the survey, an interviewer can visit with a computer you can use.

Thank you for participating in this important research study.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey H. Anderson
Director
Bureau of Justice Statistics
U.S. Department of Justice

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U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Justice Programs
Bureau of Justice Statistics
Washington, D.C. 20531

March 2020

Dear <<First>> <<Last>>,



Why did I receive this letter?

You are invited to participate in the **National Survey of Crime and Safety (NSCS)**. An interviewer came to your address a few weeks ago and you were listed as a household member. It's now your turn to take the survey.

You cannot be replaced by someone else. To make sure the results are statistically valid, only you are able to use the PIN below.

**To participate in the survey, go to www.NSCS2020.org.
Your PIN code is: <<XXXXXXXX>>**



What do I do now?

Technical Difficulties? Call the NSCS Support team at Westat at 1 855-849-6119 or send an email to NSCS@westat.com.



What is the NSCS?

The NSCS asks about people's experiences with crime in the last 12 months. It also asks people's opinions about neighborhood safety and the local police. For more details, please see www.bjs.gov/content/nscs.cfm.



Why should I participate?

- **Help your community.** Communities can use these data to help improve the effectiveness of local law enforcement.
- **Help schools.** The U.S. Department of Education can use these data to understand and help prevent school victimization.
- **Help employers.** The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services can better understand violence in the workplace.



What should I expect?

1. The survey will take about 20 to 40 minutes, depending on your experiences.
2. If you do not complete the survey, we will send a reminder and re-send the link, or an interviewer may visit your home.
3. If you do not have a way to complete the survey, an interviewer can visit with a computer you can use.

Thank you for participating in this important research study.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey H. Anderson
Director
Bureau of Justice Statistics
U.S. Department of Justice

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Exhibit A-16. Icon invitation letter to youth, no incentive treatment, Condition 3



U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Justice Programs
Bureau of Justice Statistics
Washington, D.C. 20531

March 2020

Dear <<First>> <<Last>>,



Why did I receive this letter?

You are invited to participate in the **National Survey of Crime and Safety (NSCS)**. An interviewer came to your address a few weeks ago and your parent or guardian gave us permission to ask you to participate. Now it's your turn to take the survey!

You cannot be replaced by someone else. To make sure the results are statistically valid, only you are able to use the PIN code below.



What do I do now?

**To participate in the survey, go to www.NSCS2020.org.
Your PIN access code is: <<XXXXXXXX>>**

Technical Difficulties? Call the NSCS Support team at Westat at 1 855-849-6119 or send an email to NSCS@westat.com.



What is the NSCS?

The NSCS asks about people's experiences with crime in the last 12 months. It also asks people's opinions about neighborhood safety and the local police. For more details, please see www.bjs.gov/content/hscs.cfm.



Why should I participate?

- **Help your community.** Communities can use these data to help improve the effectiveness of local law enforcement.
- **Help schools.** The U.S. Department of Education can use these data to understand and help prevent school victimization.
- **Help employers.** The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services can better understand violence in the workplace.



What should I expect?

1. The survey will take about 20 to 40 minutes, depending on your experiences.
2. If you do not complete the survey, we will send a reminder and re-send the link, or an interviewer may visit your home.
3. If you do not have a way to complete the survey, an interviewer can visit with a computer you can use..

Thank you for participating in this important research study.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey H. Anderson
Director
Bureau of Justice Statistics
U.S. Department of Justice

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Appendix B

Detailed Data Tables

Appendix B

Detailed Data Tables

Table B-1. Unweighted results of letter experiment, Conditions 1 and 2

	Condition 1				Condition 2			
	Traditional		Icon		Traditional		Icon	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Initial Sample	5,489		4,527		4,657		9,184	
Out of scope	641	11.7	521	11.5	563	12.1	1,084	11.8
In-scope Addresses	4,848	100.0	4,006	100.0	4,094	100.0	8,100	100.0
Roster completed	1,911	39.4	1,527	38.1	1,531	37.4	3,058	37.8
Roster refused	2,671	55.1	2,278	56.9	2,364	57.7	4,642	57.3
Other nonresponse	266	5.5	201	5.0	199	4.9	400	4.9
Persons enumerated	3,809		3,025		3,066		6,091	
Mean number per HH	1.99		1.98		2.00		1.99	
Household respondents	1,911	100.0	1,526	100.0	1,529	100.0	3,055	100.0
Completed interview	1,812	94.8	1,408	92.3	1,424	93.1	2,832	92.7
Incomplete interview	99	5.2	118	7.7	105	6.9	223	7.3
Partial complete	1	0.1	20	1.3	18	1.2	38	1.2
Refusal	61	3.2	68	4.5	60	3.9	128	4.2
Other nonresponse	37	1.9	30	2.0	27	1.8	57	1.9
Other adults	1,578	100.0	1,277	100.0	1,294	100.0	2,571	100.0
Completed interview	839	53.2	553	43.3	602	46.5	1,155	44.9
Incomplete interview	739	46.8	724	56.7	692	53.5	1,416	55.1
Partial complete	1	0.1	4	0.3	9	0.7	13	0.5
Refusal	495	31.4	466	36.5	446	34.5	912	35.5
Other nonresponse	243	15.4	254	19.9	237	18.3	491	19.1
Youth 12-17	320	100.0	222	100.0	243	100.0	465	100.0
Completed interview	113	35.3	71	32.0	86	35.4	157	33.8
Incomplete interview	207	64.7	151	68.0	157	64.6	308	66.2
Partial complete	1	0.3	0	0.0	2	0.8	2	0.4
Refusal	163	50.9	120	54.1	127	52.3	247	53.1
Other nonresponse	43	13.4	31	14.0	28	11.5	59	12.7
All persons 12 or older	3,809	100.0	3,025	100.0	3,066	100.0	6,091	100.0
Completed interview	2,764	72.6	2,032	67.2	2,112	68.9	4,144	68.0
Incomplete interview	1,045	27.4	993	32.8	954	31.1	1,947	32.0
Partial complete	3	0.1	24	0.8	29	0.9	53	0.9
Refusal	556	14.6	534	17.7	507	16.5	1,041	17.1
Other nonresponse	486	12.8	435	14.4	418	13.6	853	14.0

Source: 2019-2020 NCVS-R Field Test

Table B-2. Weighted response rates by letter treatment, Condition 1

	Completes		Weighted response rate		Significance test	
	Traditional	Icon	Traditional	Icon	t-value	p-value
1. Roster	1,015	896	37.8	36.8	0.55	0.59
2. Person interview, HH respondent ¹	970	842	95.3	93.9	1.00	0.32
3. Person interview, HH respondent ²	970	842	36.1	34.6	0.89	0.38
4. Person interview, other adult ³	438	400	52.8	58.0	1.59	0.12
5. Person interview, other adult ⁴	438	401	50.7	54.6	1.20	0.24
6. Parental consent for youth interview ¹	66	49	36.5	33.4	0.44	0.66
7. Youth interview ⁵	64	49	96.4	100.0	1.50	0.14
8. Youth interview ⁴	64	49	35.2	33.4	0.25	0.80
9. Household response rate ⁶	1,011	894	39.6	38.6	0.51	0.61
10. Overall person response rate ⁴	1,472	1,292	71.9	73.2	0.68	0.50
11. Final response rate ⁷	-	-	27.1	26.9	-	-

Table B-3. Weighted response rates by letter treatment, Condition 2

	Completes		Weighted response rate		Significance test	
	Traditional	Icon	Traditional	Icon	t-value	p-value
1. Roster interview	1,524	1,534	36.0	35.6	0.22	0.83
2. Person interview, HH respondent ¹	1,417	1,415	92.1	92.7	0.51	0.62
3. Person interview, HH respondent ²	1,417	1,415	33.2	33.1	0.05	0.96
4. Person interview, other adult ³	569	581	46.6	48.4	0.63	0.54
5. Person interview, other adult ⁴	571	584	43.2	45.0	0.64	0.53
6. Parental consent for youth interview ¹	78	83	35.7	34.7	0.17	0.86
7. Youth interview ⁵	76	79	98.0	97.7	0.16	0.87
8. Youth interview ⁴	76	81	35.1	33.9	0.19	0.85
9. Household response rate ⁶	1,523	1,534	37.7	37.3	0.20	0.84
10. Overall person response rate ⁴	2,064	2,080	67.2	68.8	0.82	0.42
11. Final response rate ⁷	-	-	24.2	24.5	-	-

Source: 2019-2020 NCVS-R Field Test

Footnotes for Tables B-2 and B-3:

¹ Conditional on roster completion.

² Combined rate (Row 1 x Row 2).

³ Conditional on HHR interview completion.

⁴ Number of completed interviews/number of eligible persons in roster.

⁵ Conditional on roster completion, parental consent, and HHR interview completion.

⁶ All required interviews complete in household/eligible addresses.

⁷ Row 1 x Row 10.

Table B-4. Demographic distribution of respondents by letter treatment, Conditions 1 and 2

Characteristic	Condition 1					Condition 2				
	Traditional letter		Icon letter		Chi-sq	Traditional letter		Icon letter		Chi-sq
	Unwtd count	Weighted percent	Unwtd count	Weighted percent	p-value	Unwtd count	Weighted percent	Unwtd count	Weighted percent	p-value
Age ^a					0.677					0.084
12-17	65	4.4	49	3.6		81	3.9	76	3.7	
18-29	213	16.5	209	17.9		304	16.3	276	15.2	
30-49	425	31.1	395	31.0		674	32.6	573	28.7	
50-64	371	24.7	341	26.3		481	22.7	550	26.5	
65 or older	351	23.4	274	21.2		509	24.4	560	26.0	
Race/Ethnicity ^b					0.032					0.63
Hispanic	161	12.3	144	11.3		280	13.8	245	12.7	
Non-Hispanic Black	124	9.0	149	13.1		206	10.7	214	10.8	
Non-Hispanic White	1,076	70.5	865	64.1		1,427	67.3	1,422	67.2	
Other ^c	111	8.3	135	11.4		164	8.2	177	9.3	
Sex ^d					0.207					0.629
Male	696	47.0	632	49.1		1,024	49.1	1,001	48.6	
Female	780	53.0	662	50.9		1,055	50.9	1,062	51.5	
Household Income					0.175					0.939
Under \$30,000	248	18.1	258	21.7		368	20.2	376	20.5	
\$30,000 or more	1019	68.8	836	63.5		1465	72.3	1431	72.5	
DK/REF/Missing	206	13.1	197	14.8		142	7.5	137	7.1	

Source: 2019-2020 NCVS-R Field Test.

^a Age is missing for 138 respondents.

^b Race is missing for 15 respondents.

^c "Other Race" includes the following categories from the Condition 1 and 2 questionnaires: American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and Other.

^d Sex is missing for 3 respondents.

Table B-5. Unweighted household-level results of letter experiment, Condition 3

	Traditional letter		Icon letter		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Initial Sample	3,017		3,026		6,043	
Out of scope	128	4.2	123	4.1	251	4.2
In-scope Addresses	2,889		2,903		5,792	
Roster completed	278	9.6	335	11.5	613	10.6
Roster refused	191	6.6	211	7.3	402	6.9
Other nonresponse	2,420	83.8	2,357	81.2	4,777	82.5
Persons enumerated	599		690		1,289	
Mean number per HH	2.15		2.06		2.10	

Source: 2019-2020 NCVS-R Field Test

Table B-6. Person-level results by advance letter treatment, Condition 3

	Traditional letter		Icon letter	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Persons enumerated	599	-	692	-
Household respondents	278	-	335	-
Completed interview	150	54.0	183	54.6
Incomplete interview	128	46.0	152	45.4
Partial complete	3	1.1	4	1.2
Refusal	15	5.4	18	5.4
Other nonresponse	110	39.6	130	38.8
Other adults	259	-	287	-
Completed interview	114	44.0	145	50.5
Incomplete interview	145	56.0	142	49.5
Partial complete	1	0.4	2	0.7
Refusal	21	8.1	12	4.2
Other nonresponse	123	47.5	128	44.6
Youth	62	-	70	-
Completed interview	22	35.5	33	47.1
Incomplete interview	40	64.5	37	52.9
Partial complete	2	3.2	0	0.0
Refusal	15	24.2	14	20.0
Other nonresponse	23	37.1	23	32.9
All persons	599	-	692	-
Completed interview	286	47.7	361	52.2
Incomplete interview	313	52.3	331	47.8
Partial complete	6	1.0	6	0.9
Refusal	51	8.5	44	6.4
Other nonresponse	256	42.7	281	40.6

Source: 2019-2020 NCVS-R Field Test.

Table B-7. Demographic distribution by advance letter treatment, Condition 3

	Traditional letter		Icon letter	
	Unweighted count	Unweighted percent	Unweighted count	Unweighted percent
Age^a				
12-17	65	4.4	49	3.6
18-29	213	16.5	209	17.9
30-49	425	31.1	395	31.0
50-64	371	24.7	341	26.3
65 or older	351	23.4	274	21.2
Race/Ethnicity^a				
Hispanic	125	20.9	128	18.6
Non-Hispanic Black	52	8.7	68	9.9
Non-Hispanic White	364	60.8	425	61.6
Other ^b	41	6.8	61	8.8
Sex				
Male	297	49.6	344	49.9
Female	302	50.4	346	50.1

Source: 2019-2020 NCVS-R Field Test.

^a Race/ethnicity is missing for 17 respondents.

^b "Other Race" includes the following categories from the Condition 1 and 2 questionnaires: American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and Other.

Table B-8. Person-level results by invitation letter treatment, Condition 3

	Traditional letter		Icon letter	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Persons enumerated	662	-	629	-
Household respondents	308	-	305	-
Completed interview	174	56.5	159	52.1
Incomplete interview	134	43.5	146	47.9
Partial complete	6	1.9	1	0.3
Refusal	10	3.2	23	7.5
Other nonresponse	118	38.3	122	40.0
Other adults	281		265	
Completed interview	138	49.1	121	45.7
Incomplete interview	143	50.9	144	54.3
Partial complete	0	0.0	3	1.1
Refusal	10	3.6	23	8.7
Other nonresponse	133	47.3	118	44.5
Youth	73		59	
Completed interview	30	41.1	25	42.4
Incomplete interview	43	58.9	34	57.6
Partial complete	1	1.4	1	1.7
Refusal	16	21.9	13	22.0
Other nonresponse	26	35.6	20	33.9
All persons	662		629	
Completed interview	342	51.7	305	48.5
Incomplete interview	320	48.3	324	51.5
Partial complete	7	1.1	5	0.8
Refusal	36	5.4	59	9.4
Other nonresponse	277	41.8	260	41.3

Source: 2019-2020 NCVS-R Field Test.

Table B-9. Person-level results by advance letter and invitation letter treatments, Condition 3

	Traditional HH letter						Icon HH letter					
	Invitation letter treatment						Invitation letter treatment					
	Traditional		Icon		Total		Traditional		Icon		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Persons enumerated	309	-	290	-	599	-	353	-	339	-	692	-
Household respondents	138	-	140	-	278	-	170	-	165	-	335	-
Completed interview	77	55.8	73	52.1	150	54.0	97	57.1	86	52.1	183	54.6
Incomplete interview	61	44.2	67	47.9	128	46.0	73	42.9	79	47.9	152	45.4
Partial complete	3	2.2	0	0.0	3	1.1	3	1.8	1	0.6	4	1.2
Refusal	2	1.4	13	9.3	15	5.4	8	4.7	10	6.1	18	5.4
Other nonresponse	56	40.6	54	38.6	110	39.6	62	36.5	68	41.2	130	38.8
Other adults	139	-	120	-	259	-	142	-	145	-	287	-
Completed interview	71	51.1	43	35.8	114	44.0	67	47.2	78	53.8	145	50.5
Incomplete interview	68	48.9	77	64.2	145	56.0	75	52.8	67	46.2	142	49.5
Partial complete	0	0.0	1	0.8	1	0.4	0	0.0	2	1.4	2	0.7
Refusal	5	3.6	16	13.3	21	8.1	5	3.5	7	4.8	12	4.2
Other nonresponse	63	45.3	60	50.0	123	47.5	70	49.3	58	40.0	128	44.6
Youth	32	-	30	-	62	-	41	-	29	-	70	-
Completed interview	12	37.5	10	33.3	22	35.5	18	43.9	15	51.7	33	47.1
Incomplete interview	20	62.5	20	66.7	40	64.5	23	56.1	14	48.3	37	52.9
Partial complete	1	3.1	1	3.3	2	3.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Refusal	6	18.8	9	30.0	15	24.2	10	24.4	4	13.8	14	20.0
Other nonresponse	13	40.6	10	33.3	23	37.1	13	31.7	10	34.5	23	32.9
All persons	309	-	290	-	599	-	353	-	339	-	692	-
Completed interview	160	51.8	126	43.4	286	47.7	182	51.6	179	52.8	361	52.2
Incomplete interview	149	48.2	164	56.6	313	52.3	171	48.4	160	47.2	331	47.8
Partial complete	4	1.3	2	0.7	6	1.0	3	0.8	3	0.9	6	0.9
Refusal	13	4.2	38	13.1	51	8.5	23	6.5	21	6.2	44	6.4
Other nonresponse	132	42.7	124	42.8	256	42.7	145	41.1	136	40.1	281	40.6

Source: 2019-2020 NCVS-R Field Test.

Table B-10. Roster Interview results by incentive treatment, Condition 3

	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Initial sample	3,148		2,895		6,043	
Out of scope	129	4.1	122	4.2	251	4.2
In-scope addresses	3,019		2,773		5,792	
Roster completed	326	10.8	287	10.3	613	10.6
Roster refused	196	6.5	206	7.4	402	6.9
Other nonresponse	2,497	82.7	2,280	82.2	4,777	82.5
Persons enumerated	697	2.14	592	2.06	1,289	2.10

Source: 2019-2020 NCVS-R Field Test.

Table B-11. Person-level results by incentive treatment, Condition 3

	Incentive		No Incentive	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Persons enumerated	699	-	592	-
Household respondents	326	100.0	287	100.0
Completed interview	215	66.0	118	41.1
Incomplete interview	111	34	169	58.9
Partial complete	4	1.2	3	1
Refusal	12	3.7	21	7.3
Other nonresponse	95	29.1	145	50.5
Other adults	296	100.0	250	100.0
Completed interview	175	59.1	84	33.6
Incomplete interview	121	40.9	166	66.4
Partial complete	3	1	0	0
Refusal	15	5.1	18	7.2
Other nonresponse	103	34.8	148	59.2
Youth	77	100.0	55	100.0
Completed interview	38	49.4	17	30.9
Incomplete interview	39	50.6	38	69.1
Partial complete	2	2.6	0	0
Refusal	16	20.8	13	23.6
Other nonresponse	21	27.3	25	45.5
All persons	699	100.0	592	100.0
Completed interview	428	61.2	219	37
Incomplete interview	271	38.8	373	63
Partial complete	9	1.3	3	0.5
Refusal	43	6.2	52	8.8
Other nonresponse	219	31.3	318	53.7

Source: 2019-2020 NCVS-R Field Test.

Table B-12. Household-level results by incentive and advance letter treatments, Condition 3

	Incentive				No incentive			
	Traditional letter		Icon letter		Traditional letter		Icon letter	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Initial Sample	1,575		1,573		1,442		1,453	
Out of scope	64	4.1	65	4.1	64	4.4	58	4.0
In-scope Addresses	1,511		1,508		1,378		1,395	
Roster completed	142	9.4	184	12.2	136	9.9	151	10.8
Roster refused	87	5.8	109	7.2	104	7.5	102	7.3
Other nonresponse	1,282	84.8	1,215	80.6	1,138	82.6	1,142	81.9
Persons enumerated	317		380		282		310	
Mean number per HH	2.23		2.08		2.07		2.05	

Source: 2019-2020 NCVS-R Field Test.

Table B-13. Percentage of households with reported annual income under \$30,000, by incentive and advance letter treatments, Condition 3

Household income	Incentive				No incentive				All households			
	Traditional letter		Icon letter		Traditional letter		Icon letter		Incentive		No incentive	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	94	100.0	121	100.0	56	100.0	62	100.0	215	100.0	118	100.0
Under \$30,000	24	25.5	32	26.4	4	7.1	8	12.9	56	26.0	12	10.2
\$30,000 or more	68	72.3	84	69.4	49	87.5	49	79.0	152	70.7	98	83.1
Missing	2	2.1	5	4.1	3	5.4	5	8.1	7	3.3	8	6.8