



Arrest-Related Deaths Program: Pilot Study of Redesigned Survey Methodology

Introduction

In 2003, the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) developed the Arrest-Related Deaths (ARD) program to be a census of all deaths that occur during the process of arrest or during an attempt to obtain custody by a state or local law enforcement agency (LEA) in the United States.¹ The ARD program measured all manners of arrest-related deaths, including (justifiable and non-justifiable) law enforcement homicides, suicides, deaths due to natural causes, deaths resulting from accidents, and undetermined or unknown manners of death.

BJS suspended the ARD program in 2014 due to concerns over the program's coverage and reliability. Based on findings from a coverage assessment conducted in 2014, which suggested that BJS was likely underestimating the number of arrest-related deaths, BJS redesigned the ARD program and began a pilot test of the new methodology in 2015.² The revised methodology included two phases designed to increase the reliability, validity, and comprehensiveness of the data collection. During the first phase, BJS conducted a broad but standardized review of media articles to identify potential arrest-related deaths. Results from this first phase of the ARD program-redesign were reported in the BJS technical report *Arrest-Related Deaths Program Redesign Study, 2015–16: Preliminary Findings* (NCJ 250112, BJS web, December 2016).

In the second phase, BJS surveyed LEAs and medical examiners' and coroners' (ME/C) offices. BJS asked agencies to confirm arrest-related deaths identified through media articles, identify arrest-related deaths not found through media review, and provide measures of the decedent's characteristics and of the circumstances surrounding any arrest-related death.

This technical report describes the data-collection approach and results from the survey phase of the ARD program-redesign study.

Program redesign

Phase 1: Standardized media review to identify potential arrest-related deaths

During the first phase of the ARD program-redesign study, BJS identified potential arrest-related deaths through review of open information sources, including news outlets, official agency documents, and other publicly available information. BJS built a data pipeline to manage the large volume of data returned through a series of media alerts and to minimize the number of articles that reviewers would be required to code manually. BJS also developed machine-learning classifiers to identify articles that were likely to provide information on an arrest-related death. These articles were reviewed to identify deaths that appeared to meet the ARD program scope. The resulting list of decedents

Arrest-Related Deaths and the Death in Custody Reporting Act of 2013

In 2014, Congress passed the Death in Custody Reporting Act (DCRA) of 2013. The DCRA specifies that states are responsible for reporting information to the Attorney General on deaths in custody, which includes deaths during the process of arrest. This law includes potential sanctions for non-reporting states of up to 10% of their Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) funds. Because BJS's statutory authority precludes its data from being used for anything other than statistical or research purposes, the Department of Justice has determined that data-collection responsibilities for DCRA reside with the Bureau of Justice Assistance.

¹The Arrest-Related Deaths program excludes deaths where the primary LEA involved was a federal or tribal agency.

²See *Assessment of Coverage in the Arrest-Related Deaths Program* (NCJ 249099, BJS web, October 2015).

Terms and definitions

Arrest-related death: a death that occurred when (1) the death results from use of force by law enforcement, or (2) the event causing the death (e.g., self-inflicted injury, cardiac arrest, fall from a height, or drowning) occurred while the freedom to leave of the person who subsequently died was restricted by law enforcement personnel. This includes all deaths that—

- occurred while the decedent’s freedom to leave was restricted by law enforcement prior to, during, or following an arrest
- resulted from any use of force by law enforcement personnel acting in an official capacity (e.g., officer-involved shootings or accidental deaths caused by non-lethal weapons)
- were due to medical conditions present during an arrest process that resulted in death (e.g., cardiac arrest)
- occurred during transport to or from a law enforcement agency or a detention, incarceration, or medical facility
- occurred while the decedent was held in a lockup or booking center (i.e., a facility designed to hold detainees for 72 hours or less)

- occurred during an interaction with law enforcement personnel while they were responding to a medical or mental-health incident (e.g., response to suicidal persons).

Cause of death: a description of the specific factors leading to the termination of the biological functions that sustain life.

Decedent: a person who died.

Homicide: the willful killing of one person by another, whether justified or not.

Manner of death: how a person died, typically illustrated by a one-word description of the intentions and circumstances that led to the stated medical cause of death (e.g., natural, accident, homicide, suicide, or undetermined).

Media-identified death: a death identified through review of open sources, including news outlets, official agency documents, or other publicly available information.

was then reviewed again to remove duplicate references to the same decedent, to follow up on any records with incomplete information, and to compare the decedents identified to those identified in existing open-source lists with overlapping scope. BJS identified 388 unique arrest-related deaths that occurred in June, July, and August 2015 during the phase-1 media review. The information collected during these first three months of phase 1 of the ARD program-redesign supported phase 2, the agency survey.

Phase 2: Agency survey

During the second phase of the ARD program-redesign study, BJS conducted a survey of LEAs and ME/C offices, using a dual-selection method to determine which agencies to survey. First, using the open information sources, BJS identified and selected the state and local agencies with jurisdiction over the 388 potential arrest-related deaths identified in phase 1 that occurred between June and August 2015 (484 agencies, including 342 LEAs and 142 ME/C offices) (table 1). Second, BJS assumed that the media review would not capture all arrest-related deaths during the study period, so it also surveyed a sample of agencies that were not associated with any media-identified deaths. LEAs not associated with any media-identified deaths were selected for the phase-2 survey if they—

- were not located in Texas or Maryland, which were known to have centralized reporting mechanisms in place
- had 500 or more full-time sworn officers
- were randomly sampled from the remaining agencies (those with fewer than 500 full-time sworn officers).

A total of 498 LEAs with no media-identified deaths were selected for the survey. The 232 ME/C offices with concurrent jurisdiction to those selected LEAs were also surveyed.

The ARD pilot survey was therefore disseminated to 840 LEAs and 374 ME/C offices. BJS asked 729 of the surveyed LEAs to provide measures specific to law enforcement involvement with the decedent. However, 64 agencies in California coordinated with local ME/C offices and provided both the requested LEA and ME/C office measures. The remaining 47 LEAs were located in four states with centralized reporting mechanisms in place, where one reporter provided the requested LEA and ME/C office measures:

- Maryland and Texas, which have state legislation requiring centralized reporting
- Arizona and New Jersey, which indicated they had state reporting mechanisms in place after the survey was distributed to local agencies.

TABLE 1
Agency response, by selection method and agency type, June-August 2015

Responding agency type	All agencies surveyed			Agency selection method					
	Surveyed	Responded	Response rate	At least one media-identified death			No media-identified deaths		
	Surveyed	Responded	Response rate	Surveyed	Responded	Response rate	Surveyed	Responded	Response rate
Law enforcement agency (LEA)	840	600	71.4%	342	265	77.5%	498	335	67.3%
Local LEA	729	499	68.4	251	178	70.9	478	321	67.2
500 or more full-time sworn (FTS) officers	121	88	72.7	50	33	66.0	71	55	77.5
Fewer than 500 FTS officers ^a	608	411	67.6	201	145	72.1	407	266	65.4
Combined response from local-level reporter in California ^b	64	54	84.4	44	40	90.9	20	14	70.0
500 or more FTS officers	21	16	76.2	12	11	91.7	9	5	55.6
Fewer than 500 FTS officers ^a	43	38	88.4	32	29	90.6	11	9	81.8
Combined response from state-level reporter ^c	47	47	100	47	47	100	~	~	~
500 or more FTS officers	17	17	100	17	17	100	~	~	~
Fewer than 500 FTS officers ^a	30	30	100	30	30	100	~	~	~
Medical examiner's/coroner's office	374	222	59.4%	142	103	72.5%	232	119	51.3%

~Not applicable.

^aFor 32 local LEAs, 3 combined reporters, and 3 agencies whose report came from combined state-level reporters, the number of FTS officers was known to be fewer than 500 but was otherwise unknown.

^bLEAs in California coordinated with medical examiners'/coroners' offices and completed both the CJ-11A and the CJ-12A forms.

^cDue to centralized reporting mechanisms already in place, state-level reporters completed CJ-11A and CJ-12A forms for all media-identified deaths in Arizona, Texas, Maryland, and New Jersey, representing 47 local LEAs. In addition, Texas and Maryland identified other agencies with a death that met the ARD program scope. No other agencies were directly surveyed in these states.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Arrest-Related Deaths Program-Redesign Study, 2015.

Response rates ranged from 59.4% for ME/C offices to 84.4% for LEAs that also reported on behalf of ME/C offices. State-level reporting entities had a 100% response rate. A relatively low overall response rate was expected given the exploratory nature of the pilot study, which included a 4-month response window and a 2-month follow-up for non-response. Many of these incidents involved open investigations at the time of the data collection or were connected to other matters pending, such as civil cases.

Six data-collection forms were administered primarily through an online, web-based submission process. These forms were differentiated by respondent type. The CJ-11 series collected information from the LEA respondents and the CJ-12 series from the ME/C office respondents. A summary form was distributed to all agencies. For agencies with a potential arrest-related death identified through media review, these summary forms were used to confirm arrest-related deaths identified through such review and identify any other arrest-related deaths that were not found through media review. For the sample of agencies not associated with any media-identified deaths, BJS distributed a similar summary form to the agencies to identify any arrest-related deaths that occurred. The time frame covered for all arrest-related deaths was June 1 through August 31, 2015.

For each confirmed or newly identified death, BJS asked the agencies to complete an incident form. The LEA incident form (Form CJ-11A) requests information about the decedent, the reason the LEA was involved with the decedent, actions the decedent took during the incident, and actions the LEA took during the incident. The

ME/C office incident form (Form CJ-12A) also includes decedent characteristics; in addition, the CJ-12A form includes information on the cause and manner of death.

Feasibility

The primary objectives of the phase-2 survey were to—

- confirm whether each media-identified death met the definition of an arrest-related death
- identify any other arrest-related deaths that BJS did not identify during its open-source review
- collect additional information about the decedent and the circumstances surrounding the incident for all identified arrest-related deaths.

Of the 424 arrest-related deaths occurring from June through August 2015 and confirmed to meet ARD program-eligibility criteria, 376 were initially identified through media sources and 48 were initially identified by agency survey respondents.³

Verification of media-identified deaths

BJS designed the multi-phase approach to limit reliance on media sources for decedent and incident characteristics. The media sources were used to compile a list of potential arrest-related deaths that included the

³Arrest-Related Deaths Program Redesign Study, 2015–16: Preliminary Findings (NCJ 250112, BJS web, December 2016) reported slightly different statistics: 425 deaths (377 media- and 48 agency-identified deaths) during June-August 2015. Further review identified additional deaths that met the ARD program criteria, duplicate death reports, and deaths that did not meet the criteria. This review found that 424 arrest-related deaths occurred during the 3-month study period.

TABLE 2

Agency confirmation response for media-identified deaths, by scope determination, June-August 2015

Agency confirmation response	All media-identified deaths		Through follow up, death determined to be—			
	Number	Percent of all deaths	In-scope		Out-of-scope	
			Number	Percent of agency confirmation response	Number	Percent of agency confirmation response
Media-identified deaths	388	100%	376	96.9%	12	3.1%
Confirmed deaths	298	76.8%	293	98.3%	5	1.7%
Confirmed by law enforcement agency (LEA) and medical examiner's/coroner's office (ME/C)	206	53.1	203	98.5	3	1.5
Confirmed by LEA only	51	13.1	51	100	0	0.0
Confirmed by ME/C only	41	10.6	39	95.1	2	4.9
Denied	62	16.0%	56	90.3%	6	9.7%
Denied by LEA and ME/C	20	5.2	17	85.0	3	15.0
Denied by one agency, no response from other	12	3.1	9	75.0	3	25.0
Conflicting response	30	7.7	30	100	0	0.0
No response from LEA and ME/C	28	7.2%	27	96.4%	1	3.6%

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Arrest-Related Deaths Program-Redesign Study, 2015.

decedent name, date of death, and agency involved. The survey aimed to allow the LEAs and ME/C offices to verify the death.

Of the 388 deaths that the program initially identified through media, 298 (77%) were confirmed by at least one survey respondent: the responding LEA, the ME/C office with jurisdiction over the death, or the state agency responsible for compiling information about arrest-related deaths (table 2). In 62 cases (16%), at least one agency denied a death. In 56 of those 62 cases the death was determined to meet ARD program-eligibility criteria either through the response of another agency associated with the death (30) or further review of open information sources, including further internet searches (26), which included further internet searches and review of news articles. For example, some responding agencies disagreed that a suicide should be reported as part of the ARD program and so denied jurisdiction over the death. However, media reviews indicated that the decedent committed suicide during an interaction with law enforcement, meeting the ARD program criteria.

Additional deaths identified through agency survey

An additional goal of the survey portion of the pilot study was to assess whether media searches alone were sufficient to identify all arrest-related deaths or if agency surveys would identify additional arrest-related deaths not captured through media searches. Agencies reported an additional 131 deaths through the agency survey, 48 of which were determined to meet the ARD program scope (table 3). These included 43 deaths reported by agencies associated with a media-identified arrest-related death and 5 deaths reported by the random sample of agencies without a media-identified death (not shown in tables).

To determine whether these deaths met ARD program-eligibility criteria, BJS reviewed the incident forms associated with these additional deaths and also of open-information sources. Agency-reported deaths were determined to be out-of-scope if they were duplicates of media-identified deaths, were determined not to meet ARD program-eligibility criteria (for example, were out of the pilot-study date range or occurred in a jail or prison facility), or were not accompanied by an incident form. Efforts were made to verify all agency-reported deaths through additional media searches. Of the 83 deaths reported by agencies but determined not to meet ARD program-eligibility criteria, 51% were found to have occurred in jails or prisons, 20% were duplicates of media-identified deaths, and 17% occurred outside of the pilot-study period (deaths did not occur in June, July, or August of 2015). Any deaths not found in media searches were retained for further analysis unless exclusionary criteria were otherwise identified.

TABLE 3
Arrest-Related Deaths program-scope finding for agency-added deaths, June-August 2015

Scope finding	Number	Percent
Total agency-added deaths	131	100%
Deaths determined to be in-scope	48	36.6%
Deaths determined to be out-of-scope	83	63.4%
No incident form submitted	8	9.6
Duplicate of media-identified death	17	20.5
Out-of-scope date	14	16.9
Not involving police action	2	2.4
Death occurred in jail or prison	42	50.6

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Arrest-Related Deaths Program-Redesign Study, 2015.

Combined results of media-identified and agency-identified deaths

Of all deaths determined to meet the ARD program-eligibility criteria, 89% were media-identified deaths and 11% were identified by survey respondents (table 4).

TABLE 4
Types of reporting law enforcement agencies, by death-identification source, June-August 2015

Law enforcement agency (LEA) type	All deaths		Identification source			
	Number	Percent of all deaths	Media-identified deaths		Agency-reported deaths	
			Number	Percent of LEA type	Number	Percent of LEA type
Total	424	100%	376	88.7%	48	11.3%
Local LEA with 500 or more full-time sworn officers	144	34.0	120	83.3	24	16.7
Local LEA with fewer than 500 full-time sworn officers	243	57.3	230	94.7	13	5.3
State agency	30	7.1	23	76.7	7	23.3
LEA type or size unknown/missing	7	1.7	3	42.9	4	57.1

Note: Details may not sum to totals due to rounding.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Arrest-Related Deaths Program-Redesign Study, 2015.

Among LEAs having fewer than 500 full-time sworn officers, 95% of the deaths (230 out of 243) were identified by the media. Among the 30 deaths associated with state LEAs, 77% were media-identified, and 23% were initially identified by survey respondents.

Reporting differences by manner of death

To cover manner of death, BJS includes (justifiable and non-justifiable) law enforcement homicides, suicides, deaths due to natural causes, deaths resulting from accidents, and undetermined or unknown manners of death in its definition of arrest-related deaths. The media often report on law enforcement homicides, but other manners of death may not receive comparable news coverage. Overall, 63% of the arrest-related deaths identified were reported to be justifiable or non-justifiable law enforcement homicides, followed by suicides (18%), accidents (12%), and deaths due to natural causes (1%) (table 5). Nearly all law enforcement homicides (99.6%) were identified through media sources. In comparison, media sources initially identified 83% of suicides, 54% of accidents, and 17% of deaths due to natural causes.

Reporting differences by state

Overall, 7 out of 8 deaths meeting ARD program-eligibility criteria were confirmed by at least one survey respondent, and 1 out of 8 were either declined or else had no agency respond to the request for information about the death. In 38 of the 44 states with a death during the 3-month study period, at least 80% of identified deaths were confirmed by at least one responding agency. In 26 of the 44 states with a death during the study period, 100% of identified deaths were confirmed by at least one agency (table 6).

California, Maryland, and Texas each had state-legislated requirements to report all arrest-related deaths in 2015. Texas and Maryland had a state-level entity

designated to receive these reports during the ARD program-redesign pilot study. Of the 57 arrest-related deaths that occurred in Texas during the study period, 75% were initially identified using media sources. There were four arrest-related deaths in Maryland, three (75%) of which BJS initially identified through media sources. In California, a higher percentage (92%) of all confirmed arrest-related deaths were initially identified through media sources.

In addition to Texas and California, there were eight states with more than 10 arrest-related deaths in the study period. In five (Florida, Georgia, Illinois, New York, and Pennsylvania), more than 75% of arrest-related deaths were identified using media sources. In the remaining three (Missouri, Ohio, and Washington), 75% or fewer of the deaths were initially identified using media sources.

Additional information about decedents and incidents

The final goal of the survey was to determine what decedent- and incident-level measures could be collected from LEAs and ME/C offices.

Incident-form assessment: quality and completeness

Decedent information was collected from LEAs through the CJ-11A incident form and from ME/C offices through the CJ-12A incident form. Due to the shortened data-collection and non-response follow-up periods associated with the pilot-study design, unit non-response was nearly 29% for the CJ-11A and 28% for the CJ-12A. Subsequent analyses exclude deaths for which the LEA or ME/C office did not provide information, in order to focus on how well respondents were able to provide the requested information. Media sources were not used to fill in any decedent characteristics.

TABLE 5
Manners of arrest-related deaths, by identification source, June-August 2015

Manner of death	Identification source					
	All deaths		Media-identified deaths		Agency-reported deaths	
	Number	Percent of all deaths	Number	Percent of manner of death	Number	Percent of manner of death
All manners of death	424	100%	376	88.7%	48	11.3%
Homicide ^a	268	63.2	267	99.6	1	0.4
Suicide	75	17.7	62	82.7	13	17.3
Accident	50	11.8	27	54.0	23	46.0
Natural causes	6	1.4	1	16.7	5	83.3
Undetermined	8	1.9	8	100	0	0.0
Unknown/investigation incomplete	17	4.0	11	64.7	6	35.3

^aHomicide is the willful killing of one person by another and includes justifiable homicide by a law enforcement officer.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Arrest-Related Deaths Program-Redesign Study, 2015.

TABLE 6**Number of arrest-related deaths, percent confirmed by survey respondents, and death-identification source, by state, June-August 2015**

State	Number of deaths that met Arrest-Related Deaths program-eligibility criteria	Percent of deaths confirmed by at least one survey respondent*	Death-identification source	
			Percent of deaths initially identified through media review	Percent of deaths initially identified by survey respondent
All arrest-related deaths	424	87.5%	88.7%	11.3%
Alabama	7	85.7	100	0.0
Arkansas	1	100	100	0.0
Arizona	10	100	90.0	10.0
California	65	87.7	92.3	7.7
Colorado	7	100	100	0.0
Connecticut	2	100	100	0.0
Florida	26	84.6	96.2	3.8
Georgia	15	93.3	86.7	13.3
Hawaii	2	100	100	0.0
Iowa	2	100	100	0.0
Idaho	2	100	100	0.0
Illinois	11	100	81.8	18.2
Indiana	10	100	100	0.0
Kansas	6	66.7	100	0.0
Kentucky	10	60.0	100	0.0
Louisiana	7	100	100	0.0
Massachusetts	6	100	83.3	16.7
Maryland	4	100	75.0	25.0
Maine	3	100	33.3	66.7
Michigan	4	100	100	0.0
Minnesota	3	100	100	0.0
Missouri	12	83.3	50.0	50.0
Mississippi	3	100	100	0.0
Montana	1	100	100	0.0
North Carolina	10	100	100	0.0
Nebraska	1	100	100	0.0
New Hampshire	1	100	100	0.0
New Jersey	7	85.7	100	0.0
New Mexico	8	100	87.5	12.5
Nevada	10	80.0	90.0	10.0
New York	11	81.8	100	0.0
Ohio	16	93.8	75.0	25.0
Oklahoma	10	80.0	100	0.0
Oregon	7	71.4	100	0.0
Pennsylvania	13	76.9	92.3	7.7
South Carolina	7	100	100	0.0
Tennessee	9	100	88.9	11.1
Texas	57	77.2	75.4	24.6
Utah	6	100	100	0.0
Virginia	7	85.7	100	0.0
Washington	11	90.9	72.7	27.3
Wisconsin	7	100	71.4	28.6
West Virginia	4	25.0	100	0.0
Wyoming	3	100	100	0.0

Note: States not listed had no identified arrest-related deaths during June-August 2015.

*Deaths were initially identified by a survey respondent or were confirmed by either the law enforcement agency or medical examiner's/coroner's office respondent associated with a media-identified death.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Arrest-Related Deaths Program-Redesign Study, 2015.

LEA respondents completed the CJ-11A form for 303 deaths. Information on decedent characteristics was mostly complete. There were missing or unknown data for 1% of decedents on sex, 4% of decedents on age, 6% of decedents on race, and 7% of decedents on ethnicity (Hispanic origin) (table 7).

For more than 1 in 10 of decedents, LEA responses were missing for the number of shots fired (17%), number of officers responding (14%), decedent weapon type (17%),

TABLE 7
Percent of valid, missing, and unknown responses for CJ-11A measures, June-August 2015

Question	Answered	Not answered	Marked as unknown
Location of death	99.0%	0.7%	0.3%
Type of location	99.7%	0.3%	0.0%
Decedent characteristics			
Sex	99.3%	0.7%	0.0%
Race	94.4	1.3	4.3
Hispanic origin	92.7	1.0	6.3
Age/date-of-birth	96.0	4.0	0.0
Decedent behavior			
Response to law enforcement	97.0	1.0	2.0
Exhibited mental-health problems	82.5	1.0	16.5
Had weapon	91.7	7.9	0.3
Weapon type	80.9	17.5	1.7
Attempted to injure others	82.8	11.9	5.3
Incident characteristics			
Decedent allegedly committed crime	99.3%	0.7%	0.0%
Most serious reported offenses	94.1	5.9	0.0
Number of shots fired by law enforcement officer	83.2	16.8	0.0
Other law enforcement agency response	97.4	2.6	0.0
Number of law enforcement officers responding	86.1	13.9	0.0
Reason for initial contact	97.7	1.3	1.0
Law enforcement actions			
Fought/struggled with decedent	94.4%	3.3%	2.3%
Physically restrained decedent	93.1	5.3	1.7
Restrained decedent with equipment	93.7	4.6	1.7
Placed decedent in prone position	89.4	6.6	4.0
Engaged in motor vehicle pursuit	92.4	5.6	2.0
Engaged in foot pursuit	91.1	6.6	2.3
Arrested the decedent	91.7	6.3	2.0

Note: Details may not sum to totals due to rounding. CJ-11A incident forms were completed for 303 of the 424 arrest-related deaths. Percentages are of all deaths with a completed CJ-11A form.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Arrest-Related Deaths Program-Redesign Study, 2015.

and whether the decedent attempted to injure others (12%). Information for measures related to law enforcement actions during the event was missing for fewer than 7% of decedents.

ME/C offices completed the CJ-12A form for 305 deaths. The manner and cause of death were provided by ME/C office respondents for more than 90% of the deaths for which a form was completed (table 8). ME/C offices indicated whether the death was a law enforcement homicide for less than half of the deaths with a completed CJ-12A incident form. Many ME/C offices do not distinguish law enforcement homicides from all homicides when determining the manner of death and would not be able to complete this measure. For 52% of the deaths with a completed CJ-12A incident form, respondents indicated whether substances were found in the decedent's system. Blood or other tests for substances may not have been conducted in all cases, or these results may not have been available when the incident form was completed.

TABLE 8
Percent of valid, missing, and unknown responses for CJ-12A measures, June-August 2015

Question	Answered	Not answered	Marked as unknown
Cause of death	92.5%	7.5%	0.0%
Manner of death	94.8%	1.6%	3.6%
Type of location	96.4%	3.0%	0.7%
Decedent characteristics			
Sex	99.0%	1.0%	0.0%
Race	93.1	2.6	4.3
Hispanic origin	90.8	2.6	6.6
Age/date-of-birth	95.4	4.6	0.0
Law enforcement officer homicide	44.9%	45.9%	9.2%
Substances found	52.1%	47.9%	0.0%
Weapon caused death	95.1%	3.3%	1.6%

Note: Details may not sum to totals due to rounding. CJ-12A incident forms were completed for 282 of the 424 arrest-related deaths. Percentages are of all deaths with a completed CJ-12A form.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Arrest-Related Deaths Program-Redesign Study, 2015.

Results from the hybrid approach

Manner and cause of death are medical determinations and were only included on the ME/C office data-collection form. For decedents missing manner-of-death from the ME/C office survey due to item or unit non-response (29%), all available media sources were reviewed to fill in this information.

About two-thirds (63%) of the arrest-related deaths during the 3-month study period were classified as law enforcement homicides, either on the completed incident form or through open-source review (table 9). Eighteen percent of deaths were classified as suicides and 12% as accidents. The manner of death was unknown or could not be determined for 6% of arrest-related deaths.

For the 268 deaths identified as law enforcement homicides during the 3-month study period, manner of

death was provided by ME/C offices in 73% of the deaths, while the law enforcement homicide determination was made from open-source review for 27%. For the 75 arrest-related deaths verified as suicides, manner of death was provided by ME/C offices for 61% of the deaths and determined from media sources for 39% of the deaths. Follow-up on item non-response may improve reporting on the manner of death in any future data collection. Among decedents with at least one incident form completed (376 during the 3-month study period), survey respondents reported that 96% of the arrest-related decedents were male, 62% were white, 25% were black, 19% were Hispanic, and 19% were age 24 or younger (table 10). Two-thirds of males for whom at least one incident form was completed died as a result of a homicide: 69% of white, 64% of black, 67% of Hispanic, and 78% of those age 24 or younger died as a result of a homicide (not shown in tables).

TABLE 9

Manners of arrest-related deaths, by information source, June-August 2015

Manner of death	All deaths		Source of manner-of-death measure			
	Number	Percent of all deaths	Incident form		Open source	
			Number ^a	Percent of manner-of-death	Number	Percent of manner-of-death
All manners of death	424	100%	301	71.0%	123	29.0%
Homicide ^b	268	63.2	195	72.8	73	27.2
Suicide	75	17.7	46	61.3	29	38.7
Accident	50	11.8	40	80.0	10	20.0
Natural causes	6	1.4	5	83.3	1	16.7
Undetermined	8	1.9	8	100	0	0.0
Unknown/investigation incomplete	17	4.0	7	41.2	10	58.8

Note: Manner of death was determined from review of open-source information when this information was not provided by the agency survey respondent.

^aTables 11 through 15 report on the 303 deaths for which LEAs completed a CJ-11A form. Manner of death was provided on 301 CJ-12A forms.

^bHomicide is the willful killing of one person by another and includes justifiable homicide by a law enforcement officer.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Arrest-Related Deaths Program-Redesign Study, 2015.

TABLE 10**Number and percent of arrest-related deaths, by selected decedent characteristics and manner of death, June-August 2015**

Decedent characteristic	All decedents with at least one completed incident form		Manner of death					
	Number	Percent	Homicide ^a		Suicide		Other ^b	
			Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
All decedents	376	100%	248	100%	58	100%	70	100%
Sex								
Male	361	96.0%	243	98.0%	54	93.1%	64	91.4%
Female	8	2.1	5	2.0	2	3.4	1	1.4
Missing ^c	7	1.9	0	0.0	2	3.4	5	7.1
Race								
White	232	61.7%	159	64.1%	41	70.7%	32	45.7%
Black	94	25.0	60	24.2	11	19.0	23	32.9
American Indian/ Alaska Native	3	0.8	3	1.2	0	0.0	0	0.0
Asian	2	0.5	1	0.4	1	1.7	0	0.0
Native Hawaiian/ Other Pacific Islander	2	0.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	2.9
Two or more races	1	0.3	0	0.0	1	1.7	0	0.0
Unknown ^d	33	8.8	23	9.3	2	3.4	8	11.4
Missing ^c	9	2.4	2	0.8	2	3.4	5	7.1
Hispanic origin								
Hispanic	70	18.6%	47	19.0%	6	10.3%	17	24.3%
Non-Hispanic	265	70.5	177	71.4	46	79.3	42	60.0
Unknown	31	8.2	21	8.5	4	6.9	6	8.6
Missing ^c	10	2.7	3	1.2	2	3.4	5	7.1
Approximate age								
17 or younger	7	1.9%	5	2.0%	0	0.0%	2	2.9%
18–24	66	17.6	46	18.5	9	15.5	11	15.7
25–34	104	27.7	73	29.4	13	22.4	18	25.7
35–44	79	21.0	46	18.5	15	25.9	18	25.7
45–64	83	22.1	57	23.0	13	22.4	13	18.6
65 or older	11	2.9	6	2.4	4	6.9	1	1.4
Missing ^c	26	6.9	15	6.0	4	6.9	7	10.0

Note: Details may not sum to totals due to rounding. Incident forms were missing for 48 of the 424 deaths that occurred during June-August 2015.

^aHomicide is the willful killing of one person by another and includes justifiable homicide by a law enforcement officer.

^bIncludes cases in which the death was from natural causes or accident, the manner of death could not be determined, and the investigation was incomplete, and 10 cases where the manner of death was missing/unknown.

^cIncludes both deaths where no CJ-12A was completed and those where manner of death was missing.

^dIncludes 18 cases (14 homicides and 4 other manner of death) for which survey respondents indicated that the decedent was of Hispanic origin but no race information was provided.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Arrest-Related Deaths Program-Redesign Study, 2015.

Reason for contact

LEA respondents reported a reason for the initial contact between law enforcement and the decedents in 98% of the deaths with a completed incident form (table 11).

Among the incidents where the initial reason for contact was reported, 50% of law enforcement homicides and 56% of suicides were initiated by a civilian request for a law enforcement response to criminal or suspicious activity. Nine percent of law enforcement homicides were initiated by a traffic or vehicle stop and 8% were initiated during routine patrol. Nine percent of suicides were initiated by a warrant service, and 7% were initiated by a traffic or vehicle stop. About 10% of law enforcement homicides and 12% of suicides were initiated by a civilian request for medical, mental health, or welfare assistance.

TABLE 11

Percent of arrest-related deaths, by reason for initial law enforcement contact as reported by responding agencies, June-August 2015

Reason for initial contact	All manners of death	Manner of death		
		Homicide ^a	Suicide	Other
Total number of deaths	303	211	43	39
All arrest-related deaths	100%	100%	100%	100%
Request for law enforcement response to criminal/suspicious activity ^b	49.8	50.2	55.8	41.0
Request for medical/mental health/welfare assistance ^b	11.2	10.4	11.6	17.9
Traffic/vehicle stop	10.9	8.5	7.0	25.6
Routine patrol	6.6	7.6	2.3	2.6
Warrant service	6.9	6.2	9.3	7.7
Some other reason	12.2	13.7	14.0	5.1
Unknown	1.0	1.4	0.0	0.0
Item missing	1.3	1.9	0.0	0.0

Note: Details may not sum to totals due to rounding. Manner of death was missing for 10 arrest-related deaths. CJ-11A forms were missing for 121 of the 424 arrest-related deaths.

^aHomicide is the willful killing of one person by another and includes justifiable homicide by a law enforcement officer.

^bRequest could have been made by decedent or other individual.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Arrest-Related Deaths Program-Redesign Study, 2015.

Decedent actions and perceived state of mind

Among decedents with a completed incident form, LEAs reported that the decedent was alleged to have committed a crime in 93% of all incidents and 97% of law enforcement homicide incidents (table 12). Among law enforcement homicides where the type of alleged crime was reported, 82% were reported as a violent

offense, including 47% involving assault and another 20% involving attempted or completed homicide. Among arrest-related deaths due to suicide (43 with a completed incident form), 88% of decedents were alleged to have committed a crime in the events leading up to the death. Among suicides by those alleged to have committed a crime, 68% were reported as a violent offense and 29% were homicides or attempted homicides.

TABLE 12

Percent of arrest-related deaths, by alleged crimes committed by decedent and manner of death, as reported by responding agencies, June-August 2015

During events up to death	All manners of death	Manner of death		
		Homicide ^a	Suicide	Other
Total deaths	303	211	43	39
Deceased committed or allegedly committed any crime	93.4%	96.7%	88.4%	82.1%
Most serious alleged offense:				
Violent	73.5	82.4	68.4	34.4
Homicide	7.8	7.4	15.8	3.1
Attempted homicide	10.6	12.3	13.2	0.0
Robbery	6.7	6.9	5.3	3.1
Assault	39.2	46.6	26.3	15.6
Other violent ^b	9.2	9.3	7.9	12.5
Property ^c	6.7	3.9	15.8	9.4
Drug	2.8	2.0	2.6	9.4
Weapon	4.6	4.4	5.3	6.3
Public order/other ^d	9.9	5.9	5.3	31.3
Unknown/no alleged offense	2.5	1.5	2.6	9.4
Deceased did not commit or allegedly commit any crimes	5.9%	2.8%	11.6%	15.4%
Missing	0.7%	0.5%	0.0%	2.6%

Note: Details may not sum to totals due to rounding. Manner of death was missing for 10 arrest-related deaths. CJ-11A forms were missing for 121 of the 424 arrest-related deaths.

^aHomicide is the willful killing of one person by another and includes justifiable homicide by a law enforcement officer.

^bIncludes other violent offenses, kidnapping, and carjacking.

^cIncludes burglary, larceny, or other property offenses.

^dIncludes traffic violation, resisting arrest, or other public-order offenses.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Arrest-Related Deaths Program-Redesign Study, 2015.

Among incidents with a completed CJ-11A form, LEAs reported that the decedent had possessed or had appeared to possess a weapon in 89% of law enforcement homicides and 98% of suicides (table 13). The decedent was reported to have discharged a firearm in 77% of suicides, compared to 28% of law enforcement homicides. In 83% of law enforcement homicides, the decedent was reported to have attempted to injure officers or others.⁴ LEA respondents reported that nearly half of the decedents had attempted to or succeeded in fleeing or escaping from custody.

⁴The law enforcement incident form included two measures combined into the “Attempt to physically assault officer(s) or others” measure in figure 1. This measure includes a “yes” response to either: At any time during the incident, did the decedent attempt to (1) injure officers or others, or (2) physically assault officers?

TABLE 13
Decedent actions during death-incident, June-August 2015

Decedent action	Homicide ^a	Suicide	Other
Total deaths	211	43	39
Was armed/appeared to be armed	89.1%	97.7%	17.9%
Attempted to physically assault officers/others ^b	82.9	32.6	41.0
Attempted to or did escape/flee from custody	41.7	46.5	51.3
Resisted being handcuffed/arrested	30.8	18.6	46.2
Verbally threatened others	30.3	20.9	17.9
Discharged firearm	28.4	76.7	5.1
Barricaded self/initiated standoff	22.3	41.9	2.6
Attempted to gain possession of officer's weapon	4.3	2.3	0.0

Note: Details may not sum to totals due to rounding. Manner of death was missing for 10 arrest-related deaths. CJ-11A forms were missing for 121 of the 424 arrest-related deaths.

^aHomicide is the willful killing of one person by another and includes justifiable homicide by a law enforcement officer.

^bIncludes a yes response to either: At any time during the incident, did the decedent attempt to (1) injure officers or others, or (2) physically assault officers?

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Arrest-Related Deaths Program-Redesign Study, 2015.

The ARD program survey of agencies was designed to determine whether information about the circumstances surrounding arrest-related deaths, including the decedent's perceived state of mind during the event, could reliably be collected from LEAs. Responding officers may have known a decedent through prior contacts or calls for service. In those cases, officers or LEAs may have gathered information about the subject's mental history or status that could have informed their perceptions at the time of the incident.

LEAs responding to the ARD program-redesign pilot-study were asked to provide information on the decedent's perceived state of mind during the arrest-related death. LEAs reported that the decedent exhibited mental-health problems in 18% of all arrest-related deaths (table 14). In incidents for which the decedents state of mind was reported, 31% of decedents had appeared intoxicated and 19% had reportedly made suicidal statements.

Law enforcement officer actions

Pilot-study survey respondents also reported pursuit-and-restraint tactics used in the incidents leading up to an arrest-related death. In incidents with a completed CJ-11A form, agencies reported that responding officers fought or struggled with decedents in 20% of law enforcement homicides and 9% of suicides (table 15). Officers reported engaging in a motor vehicle pursuit in 21% of suicides, compared to in 15% of law enforcement homicides. Arrests were reportedly made in 16% of law enforcement homicides, compared to in 7% of suicides.

TABLE 15
Percent of arrest-related deaths, by law enforcement actions during incident, as reported by responding agencies, June-August 2015

Law enforcement action during incident	All manners of death	Manner of death ^a		
		Homicide ^b	Suicide	Other
Total deaths	303	211	43	39
Fought/struggled with the decedent	22.1%	19.9%	9.3%	41.0%
Restrained decedent with equipment ^c	21.5	12.3	9.3	69.2
Arrested the decedent	19.1	16.1	7.0	41.0
Engaged in foot pursuit	18.2	16.6	18.6	23.1
Engaged in motor vehicle pursuit	17.2	14.7	20.9	25.6
Physically restrained decedent ^d	10.6	7.6	4.7	28.2
Placed decedent in prone position	9.6	6.2	2.3	28.2

Note: Information on law enforcement actions missing/unknown for between 17 and 32 of the 303 arrest-related deaths with a completed incident form. Manner of death was missing for 10 arrest-related deaths. CJ-11A incident forms were missing for 121 of the 424 arrest-related deaths that occurred during June-August 2015. Details may not sum to totals because more than one response was allowed.

^aManner of death missing/unknown for 10 of the 303 arrest-related deaths with a completed CJ-11A incident form.

^bHomicide is the willful killing of one person by another and includes justifiable homicide by a law enforcement officer.

^cIncludes restraining with handcuffs or leg shackles.

^dIncludes restraining with control holds or body compression.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Arrest-Related Deaths Program-Redesign Study, 2015.

TABLE 14
Decedent's perceived state of mind during incident, by manner of death, June-August 2015

Perceived decedent state of mind during incident	All manners of death		Manner of death					
	Number	Percent	Homicide*		Suicide		Other	
			Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total deaths	303	~	211	~	43	~	39	~
Made suicidal statements	58	19.1%	39	18.5%	15	34.9%	4	10.3%
Appeared intoxicated	95	31.4	61	28.9	5	11.6	24	61.5
Exhibited mental-health problems	55	18.2	41	19.4	4	9.3	8	20.5
Unknown	50	16.5	30	14.2	15	34.9	4	10.3
None of the above	92	30.4	73	34.6	9	20.9	6	15.4
Missing	3	1.0	3	1.4	0	0.0	0	0.0

Note: Details may not sum to totals because more than one response was allowed for decedents that exhibited any of the listed behaviors. Manner of death was missing for 10 arrest-related deaths. Perceptions were reported by responding agencies. CJ-11A forms were missing for 121 of the 424 arrest-related deaths.

~Not applicable.

*Homicide is the willful killing of one person by another and includes justifiable homicide by a law enforcement officer.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Arrest-Related Deaths Program-Redesign Study, 2015.

Comparison of deaths identified by BJS’s methodology with other counts of arrest-related deaths

The scope of the Arrest-Related Deaths (ARD) program pilot-study included all deaths that were the result of law enforcement’s use of force and any deaths that occurred while the decedents’ freedom to leave was restricted by law enforcement. The ARD program pilot-study excluded any deaths that occurred under the jurisdiction of a federal or tribal law enforcement agency (LEA) or while the decedent was in the custody of a detention facility designed to hold individuals for longer than 72 hours (e.g., a jail or prison). Deaths in prisons and jails are reported by the Mortality in Correctional Institutions collection.

In addition to the coding and classification pipeline used to identify potential arrest-related deaths through media alerts, the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) also consulted existing open-source lists of deaths with inclusionary criteria that overlapped with the ARD program, including lists maintained by *The Guardian’s* The Counted project, *The Washington Post*, Killed by Police, Fatal Encounters, and the Gun Violence Archive.⁵ *The Guardian* includes deaths due to law enforcement shooting and other uses of force and excludes suicides, other self-inflicted deaths, and drug overdoses in police custody.⁶ *The Washington Post*

includes deaths due to police shootings. The ARD program pilot-study included all manners of death: those due to natural causes, accidents, suicides, and homicides, and deaths where the manner of death was undetermined or still under investigation. It included 48 deaths identified through the LEA survey and not found in media sources. (See table 4.)

BJS collected data on the manner of death for all arrest-related deaths identified through media sources and for those media-identified deaths found in *The Guardian* and *The Washington Post* lists (table 16). Both sources may include additional deaths that do not meet the ARD program scope, such as deaths that occurred in the custody of federal law enforcement or in a local jail.

Of the 376 deaths meeting the ARD program scope and identified through media sources, 290 were also included in *The Guardian*. *The Guardian* excludes some deaths due to accidents, suicide, or natural causes, while the ARD program includes all of those manners of death when the decedent’s freedom to leave was restricted by law enforcement and the death occurred prior to booking into a facility that houses inmates for longer than 72 hours. Among the 86 media-identified deaths that met the ARD program scope but were not found in *The Guardian’s* list, 57 were suicides, 17 were accidents, 7 had an unknown or undetermined manner of death, 4 were homicides, and 1 was due to natural causes. Of the four homicides

⁵See *Arrest-Related Deaths program scope* text box in *Arrest-Related Deaths Program Redesign Study, 2015–16: Preliminary Findings* (NCJ 250112, BJS web, December 2016).

⁶See <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/ng-interactive/2015/jun/01/about-the-counted>.

TABLE 16
Deaths identified by the Arrest-Related Deaths program pilot-study compared to those found in *The Guardian* and *The Washington Post*, June–August 2015

Manner of death	Total media-identified deaths	Found in <i>The Washington Post</i>		Found in <i>The Guardian</i>	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
All deaths	376	262	114	290	86
Natural causes	1	0	1	0	1
Homicide*	267	255	12	263	4
Accident	27	0	27	10	17
Suicide	62	5	57	5	57
Could not be determined	8	2	6	7	1
Investigation incomplete	0	0	0	0	0
Unknown	11	0	11	5	6

*Homicide is the willful killing of one person by another and includes justifiable homicide by a law enforcement officer.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Arrest-Related Deaths Program-Redesign Study, 2015.

Continued on next page

Comparison of deaths identified by BJS's methodology with other counts of arrest-related deaths (continued)

included in the ARD program study and not found in *The Guardian*, two were due to restraint tactics in combination with other complicating factors. Another one resulted from a law enforcement shooting, and it is unclear why *The Guardian* did not include this death. The fourth death had insufficient information to determine whether the homicide was the result of law enforcement use of force.

Of the 376 deaths meeting the ARD program scope and identified through media sources, 262 were in *The Washington Post's* list of deaths due to police shootings. As noted above, *The Washington Post* list only includes deaths due to law enforcement's discharging a firearm while on duty. The ARD program includes deaths that occur when a law enforcement officer is off-duty but acting in an official capacity, law enforcement homicides due to other use of force, and other manners of death that occur while the decedent's freedom to leave was restricted by law enforcement. Of 114 media-identified deaths that met the ARD program

scope but were not found in *The Washington Post*, 57 were suicides, 27 were accidents, 17 had an unknown or undetermined manner of death, 12 were homicides, and 1 was due to natural causes. Of the 12 homicides not included in *The Washington Post* list, 4 occurred while the officer was off-duty, 1 occurred while the decedent was in the process of being booked, 6 resulted from law enforcement's use of force other than firearm discharge, and 1 death had insufficient information to determine whether the homicide was the result of law enforcement's use of force. *The Washington Post* included seven deaths determined by an ME/C office as either a suicide (5) or an undetermined manner of death (2) through the ARD program survey that included official manner and causes of death. This information may have been unavailable through open sources. For example, one of the deaths ruled a suicide occurred after the decedent and law enforcement exchanged gunfire, but the ME/C offices ultimately determined that the decedent died from a self-inflicted gunshot wound.

Summary

The hybrid approach to identifying arrest-related deaths, which combined information from media reviews and agency surveys, resulted in improvements in data completeness and quality. From 2003 to 2009, the ARD program identified 375 to 496 arrest-related deaths per year.⁸ In 2011, when the ARD program began to include open information source review, 689 deaths were identified. The ARD program-redesign pilot-study identified 424 arrest-related deaths during the 3-month study period.

The ARD program-redesign pilot-study indicated that the hybrid approach to identifying and collecting information about arrest-related deaths was informative on several fronts. Surveying LEAs and ME/C offices directly identified 48 more decedents than would have been identified through open-source review alone. These agency-identified deaths were more likely to be suicides or accidents, which media sources are less likely to cover. Most of these deaths (43) were identified by agencies

already associated with another media-identified death. However, the random sample of approximately 500 LEAs and the ME/C offices with concurrent jurisdiction without a media-identified death found five deaths (none of them law enforcement homicides). This sample of agencies was not intended to be nationally representative; rather, it was intended to explore whether media sources were capturing all law enforcement homicides or arrest-related deaths.

While the agency survey identified 131 additional deaths, 83 of these were ultimately determined to be out-of-scope, suggesting deaths identified by an agency survey would likely require additional verification. In addition, respondents denied 62 of the potential arrest-related deaths initially identified through open-source review. Further research indicated that 56 of those deaths met the ARD program-eligibility criteria and 6 were out-of-scope.

⁸See *Assessment of Coverage in the Arrest-Related Deaths Program*, NCJ 249099, BJS web, October 2015.

The ARD program pilot-study achieved a response rate of 71% from local LEAs and 59% from ME/C offices. Four states with centralized reporting mechanisms in place at the time of the pilot study achieved 100% response rates: Arizona, Maryland, New Jersey, and Texas. Agency participation levels may improve with more aggressive non-response follow-up activities and response periods longer than 4 months. Given the limited scope of this pilot study, these activities were given minimal attention.

A majority of responding LEAs and ME/C offices provided decedent and incident characteristics. Although measures to describe the incident that led to a death were missing for 20% to 30% of all law enforcement homicides, much of the missing information was due to agency non-response, and item non-response may be due to incomplete records or pending investigations. Furthermore, information on the circumstances surrounding these incidents may be reported inconsistently, if at all, in media coverage of many arrest-related deaths. The responding agency is likely in the best position to provide information about why law enforcement was interacting with the decedent and what occurred that led to the death.

The pilot study identified some survey items that appeared inconsistent with information reported elsewhere or that may not have been measured reliably across respondents. Any future instrumentation should consider some revisions to the current incident forms and include a cognitive interviewing component to test respondent understanding of the revised measures. For several decedents who committed suicide, the law enforcement incident form indicated that the individual possessed a firearm but did not discharge it. However, information from the ME/C office form or elsewhere indicated that a firearm may have been discharged by the decedent, resulting in death. Here, information on whether the decedent discharged a firearm may not be readily available to law enforcement and potentially is only available following an internal investigation.

The law enforcement incident form included two items intended to measure overlapping decedent actions: At any time during the incident, did the decedent attempt to—

- physically assault officers?
- injure officers or others?

Some respondents reported that the decedent attempted to physically assault officers but did not attempt to injure officers or others. Respondents may have had differing interpretations of “attempt to injure” and “attempt to physically assault.” Other respondents may have been confused by a second question that focused on “others” in addition to the “officers” who were the focus of the first question. BJS recommends future efforts to adjust terminology to minimize confusion.

Overall, the redesign-study implemented a standardized data-collection strategy across agencies, resulting in significant improvements in data completeness and quality compared to the previous ARD program methodology. There remain limitations and outstanding questions related to agencies’ response rates, the utility of randomly sampling LEAs not associated with a media-identified death, and whether a survey of ME/C offices is necessary or if LEA respondents can coordinate with ME/C offices to report the needed information.

The ARD program pilot-study included a random sample of agencies without a media-identified arrest-related death to gauge the extent to which deaths may be known to and reported by LEAs but not covered in the media. BJS surveyed 730 agencies (LEAs and ME/C offices) not associated with a media-identified death and identified five in-scope arrest-related deaths (1% of the 424 arrest-related deaths that occurred during the study period). Meanwhile, agencies with a media-identified death reported 43 in-scope deaths not initially identified through media sources.

While ME/C office respondents are likely the best source of decedent demographic measures and of the manner and cause of death, their response rates were lower than LEA respondents. They also reported a number of deaths that were out-of-scope because they occurred in jails or prisons. BJS recommends focusing non-response follow-up resources on LEAs and requesting that the LEA respondents coordinate with ME/C offices, as several states did in the pilot study, to provide information on decedent demographics and the manner and cause of death.

The methodology described herein shows promise for the identification and collection of information on arrest-related deaths. However, it is a resource-intensive approach. If it is to be deployed on a large scale, the advantages of employing the hybrid approach and the resources required to do so should both be taken into account.



The Bureau of Justice Statistics of the U.S. Department of Justice is the principal federal agency responsible for measuring crime, criminal victimization, criminal offenders, victims of crime, correlates of crime, and the operation of criminal and civil justice systems at the federal, state, tribal, and local levels. BJS collects, analyzes, and disseminates reliable statistics on crime and justice systems in the United States, supports improvements to state and local criminal justice information systems, and participates with national and international organizations to develop and recommend national standards for justice statistics. Jeffrey H. Anderson is the director.

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