Welcome to the National Crime Victimization Survey Knowledge Corner. This short video will focus on the NCVS data file structure.

There are two options for the NCVS public use data files – annual files and concatenated or cumulative data files. These data files are archived at the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data, or NACJD.

Annual files include individual year of data and codebooks contain detailed information for that particular year. There are five data files included when you download an annual data study from NACJD. "Study" is the term NACJD uses to refer to the data collection they are archiving. They have studies available in a variety of software types. We'll discuss more details about the three most important files shortly, but for a quick overview now.

The address file contains information about the household as reported by the respondent and characteristics of the surrounding area as computed by the U.S. Census Bureau. There's not a lot of variables on this file.

The household file contains information about the household. A primary use of this file is to estimate the number of households in the U.S.

Person file contains information about each household member age 12 or older. The primary use of this file is to estimate the number of persons age 12 older in the U.S.

The incident file contains information from the incident report completed for each household incident or person incident mentioned during the NCVS interview.

And finally, the incident-level extract file, which is not the same as the incident record type file, is a file created by appending household and person variables to incident records. This allows analysts to examine demographic characteristics and household characteristics of persons that reported a crime incident. Files 2, 3, and 5 are the most commonly used for NCVS analysis.

Concatenated or cumulative files include years of data from 1992 to the most recent year. Using these files allows for the examination of crime over time. We're looking at trends and crime. Concatenated codebooks include less details because there are so many years of data included in these files. Data users should refer to the specific annual codebooks for more information about a particular year of NCVS data.

There are three data files included when you download a concatenated NCVS study – household, person, and incident-level extract files.

This graphic shows and explains the hierarchical structure of the NCVS data and subsequent data files. First, you have an address and then a household living within that address. We'll say the Morgan family lives at this address and there are three people in the household age 12 or older. The first person recorded two incidents within

the last 6-month reference period. The other two people living in the household didn't report any incidents. Then, let's say the Morgan family moved and the Smith family moved into the address. They would become the new household and would now be interviewed for the NCVS because that address is still in the NCVS sample. They have one person age 12 or older living in the household and they reported one incident that occurred in the past 6 months.

As I said earlier, there are three most important data files within the NCVS data study which is why I'm going to discuss further here.

The household file contains information about the household and household respondents. The household respondent must be 18 years old and is the person most knowledgeable about the household. Household variables are named V2xxx, so these are the 2000 level variables. The person file contains information about each person in the household ages 12 or older. Person-level variables are named V3xxx or 3000 level variables.

The incident file contains information about each criminal incident reported by a respondent. Personal crimes include violent crimes and personal larceny and can be reported by any person age 12 or older. Property crimes are classified as household-level crimes and reported by the household respondent. Incident-level variables are named V4xxx or 4,000 level variables. Remember what I said earlier about the incident-level extract file having household and person demographic characteristics on it. The household-level variables would be named V2xxx and the person-level variables would be named V3xxx on the incident-level extract file. The household- and person-level files contain records or rows of data for all persons and households in the sample even if they didn't report any victimization within the last 6 months because we want to know the denominator. So that we can say out of X persons or households in the population, Y experienced a victimization or incident. The incident file only contains people who report victimization. Each row of data is a different incident. If someone reported more than one incident, each of those incidents would be a separate row of data on the file.

The NCVS annual public-use data files include collection year data from January 1st to December 31st. These dates are based on the date of the interview, not the date of the incident.

Most of the sampled persons in households should be included twice in the person- or household-level files. NCVS interviews are conducted continuously throughout the year, and persons in each household are interviewed every 6 months for a total of seven interviews.

So, in the data files, interview 1 is January through June, and interview 2 is July through December. One-seventh of the sample phases in during July through December and one-seventh of the sample phases out along with the addition of replacement households, or when a new family moves into a sampled household. Keep in mind then

that every person or household won't have two interviews in a given year, but the majority will.

For additional information on the NCVS, see the NCVS page on the BJS webpage. You can also see the NCVS technical documentation for more information about the methodology. Please email askbjs@usdoj.gov with any questions and your email will be forwarded to BJS statisticians with topical experience. Finally, you can access the NCVS public-use data files at the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data.

Thank you.