



Update on the NCVS Instrument Redesign: Full Implementation of New Instrument

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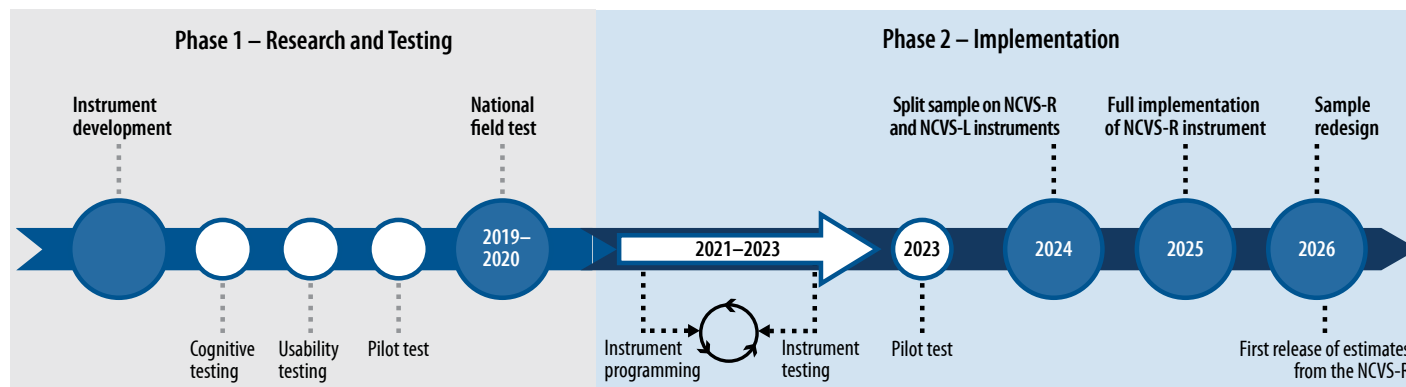
The Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) successfully transitioned in January 2025 to the new National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) instrument, moving the redesigned instrument from a testing to a production environment ([figure 1](#)). Through this step, BJS achieved a key milestone in the multiyear effort to improve the efficiency, reliability, and utility of the NCVS. This summary report provides an update on the implementation of the redesigned NCVS (NCVS-R) instrument and highlights key changes between the new and the legacy instruments.¹ The summary also describes updates to the data processing steps and general next steps for the redesigned instrument as BJS nears the end of Phase 2 (Implementation).²

¹Throughout this report, the legacy NCVS instrument that was administered from 1992 to 2024 is referred to as the “NCVS-L” instrument and the new, or redesigned, instrument is referred to as the “NCVS-R” instrument.

²See [Update on the NCVS Instrument Redesign](#) (NCJ 304055, BJS, March 2022) for more information on Phase 1 of this effort (Research and Testing).

BJS typically releases annual estimates from the NCVS in the fall of the year following data collection, so victimization estimates from the 2025 NCVS would normally be released in the fall of 2026. Following the concurrent administration of the NCVS-L and NCVS-R instruments in 2024 through a split-sample design, BJS released the 2024 NCVS-L data and corresponding [Criminal Victimization, 2024](#) (NCJ 310547, BJS, September 2025) report. In order to balance BJS’s commitment to the timely release of data to the public with the complexities associated with building new data processing systems for the NCVS, BJS is releasing victimization estimates from the 2024 NCVS-R in [Victimization Estimates from the Redesigned NCVS Instrument, 2024](#) (NCJ 312200, BJS, October 2026) and will release preliminary findings from the 2025 NCVS in advance of a full analysis. BJS will update the [Forthcoming Publications](#) page on the BJS website when timelines are finalized.

FIGURE 1
NCVS instrument redesign timeline



Note: “NCVS-L” denotes the legacy National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) instrument that was administered from 1992 to 2024 and “NCVS-R” denotes the new, or redesigned, instrument.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2026.

Transitioning to the new NCVS instrument

From January to December 2024, BJS coordinated with the Census Bureau, the NCVS data collection agent, to administer the NCVS-L and NCVS-R instruments simultaneously; interviews for half of the sampled households used the NCVS-L and the other half used the NCVS-R; the computer-assisted personal interviewing instrumentation and case management systems, which assigned legacy and redesign cases to Census Bureau interviewers, performed as expected, and data were successfully collected for both instruments. The split sample informed final minor updates to field interviewer protocols, interviewer training materials, and instrument functionality (i.e., instrument flow and question skip patterns) for the full-scale implementation of the new instrument.³

The purpose of the split sample was to maintain BJS's ability to report criminal victimization data while phasing in the redesigned instrument. Data from the split sample will allow BJS to measure differences in victimization estimates between 2024 and 2025 using the new instrument. BJS fully implemented the new instrument in January 2025, and all interviews of sampled households now use this instrument.

For NCVS-L data collected in 2024, BJS released *Criminal Victimization, 2024* [\(NCJ 310547, BJS, September 2025\)](#) with victimization estimates, public-use data files, and documentation. BJS is releasing victimization estimates from the 2024 NCVS-R data in *Victimization Estimates from the Redesigned NCVS Instrument, 2024* [\(NCJ 312200, BJS, October 2026\)](#).

³See *Update on the NCVS Instrument Redesign: Operational Pilot Test and Split Sample* [\(NCJ 306051, BJS, June 2023\)](#) for more information.

National Crime Victimization Survey

The National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) is the nation's primary source of information on criminal victimization. Each year, data are obtained from a nationally representative sample of about 240,000 persons in about 150,000 U.S. households. Persons age 12 or older are interviewed on the frequency, characteristics, and consequences of criminal victimization in the United States.

The NCVS collects information on nonfatal personal crimes (i.e., rape or sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault, simple assault, and personal larceny) and household property crimes (i.e., burglary or trespassing, motor vehicle theft, and other types of theft), including those that are reported and not reported to the police. Survey respondents provide information about themselves (e.g., age, sex, race, Hispanic origin, marital status, education level, and income) and whether they experienced a victimization. For more information, see the NCVS data collection page at <https://bjs.ojp.gov/data-collection/ncvs> [↗](#).

Highlights of the new NCVS instrument

The redesigned National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS-R) instrument maintains the two-stage measurement approach (victimization screener and crime incident report) to screening and classifying criminal victimization traditionally used in the NCVS. Key features of the instrument include the addition of two periodic rotating modules asked of all respondents, enhanced crime screeners, and improvements to the measurement of victimization and incident characteristics, among other updates (figure 2).

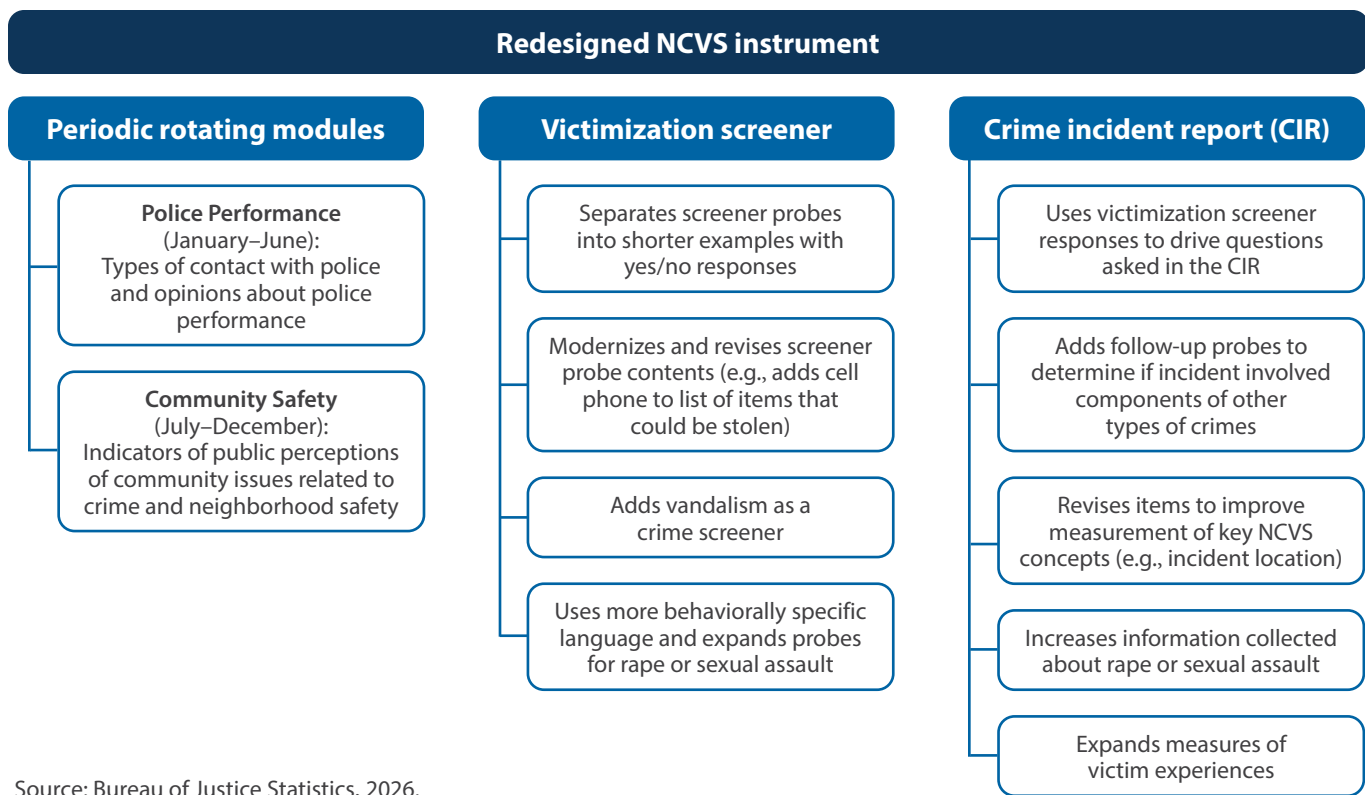
Compared to the legacy NCVS (NCVS-L) instrument, the NCVS-R instrument offers improved measurement of similar types of nonfatal personal and household victimizations, including additional details on victimization incidents. The NCVS-R also measures vandalism, which had previously not been captured. BJS anticipates that victimization estimates from the NCVS-R may differ from the NCVS-L, specifically due to the use of expanded screener probes and more behaviorally specific language for rape or sexual assault items. For each victimization incident, data users will be able to examine additional details, including improved measures of victim–offender

relationships (e.g., expanded types of intimate partner relationships) and the consequences of victimization, new measures of police satisfaction when reporting victimization, and new measures on the types of victim services received. Finally, the Police Performance and Community Safety modules provide indicators about police performance and public perceptions of community issues that can be examined over time and by whether respondents experienced victimization.

Data collection for the modules will be rotated every 6 months (i.e., Police Performance will be collected from January through June, and Community Safety will be collected from July through December). With the expanded crime screeners and new modules, on average the NCVS-R instrument takes about 34 minutes to complete compared to 25 minutes for the NCVS-L instrument. Overall, item nonresponse and breakoffs for the redesigned instrument are low based on initial assessment of the split sample data.

BJS provides more details about the instrument redesign at <https://bjs.ojp.gov/programs/ncvs/instrument-redesign>.

FIGURE 2
Key features of the redesigned NCVS instrument



Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2026.

NCVS instrument redesign data processing

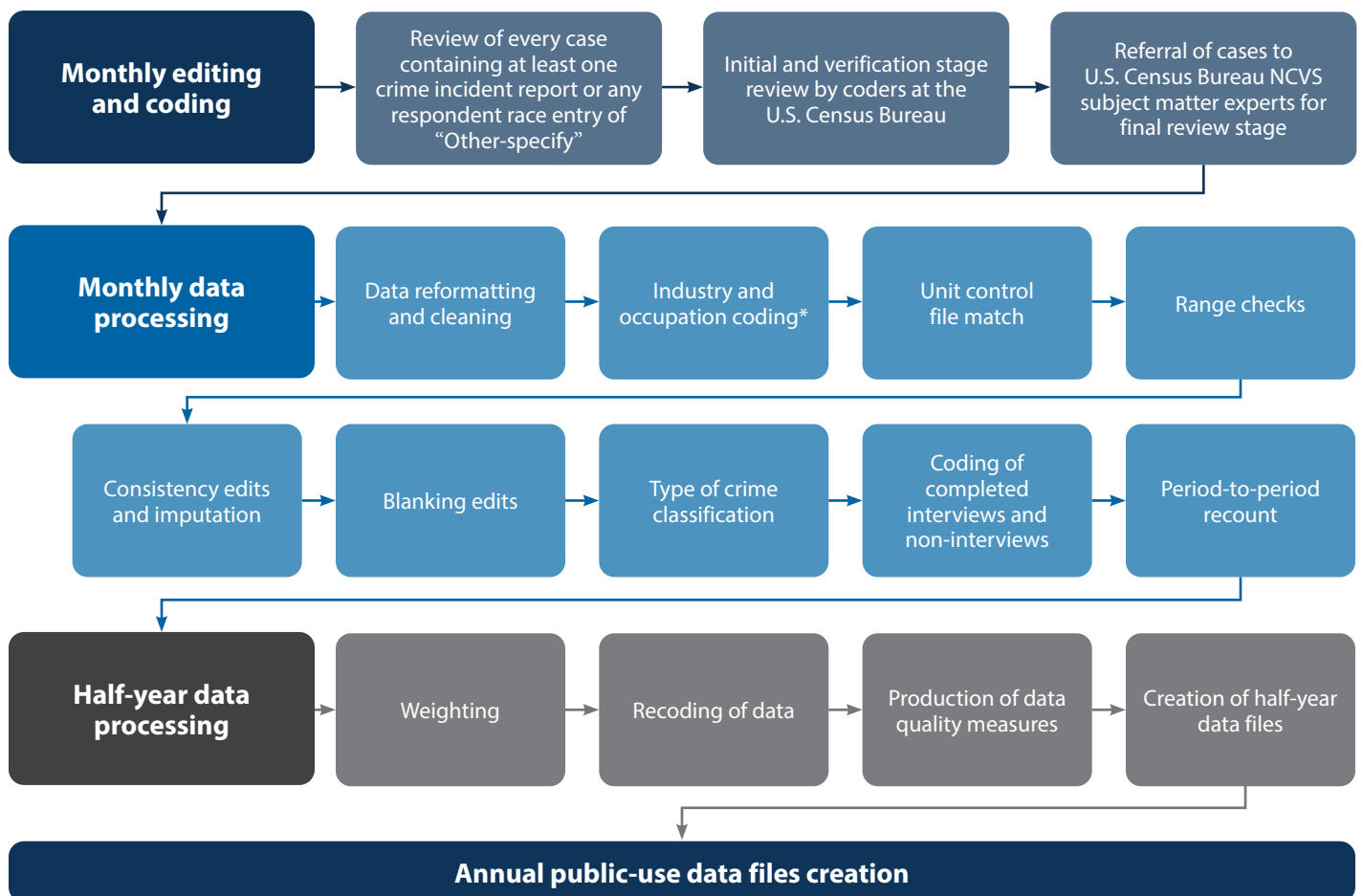
BJS and the Census Bureau have built new systems to process monthly data from the redesigned instrument. Data processing—an integral part of post-data collection activities—involves important steps to ensure data and crime estimates BJS publishes are accurate, consistent, and reliable. This process is important for quality control as it minimizes errors in the final data files. Although many of the same processing steps occur for NCVS-R data as for NCVS-L data (e.g., editing and coding, imputation, and weighting), BJS and the Census Bureau updated each step to accommodate differences between the two instruments.

For the NCVS, data processing steps include a full review and coding of the crime incidents reported by respondents. BJS and the Census Bureau have been monitoring data

quality measures (e.g., item response rates) and reviewing victimization incidents collected in the new instrument for proper classification based on respondents' answers to the survey items and incident text summaries.

BJS and the Census Bureau reviewed and updated all editing and coding procedures and training for the Census Bureau coders to account for changes to the NCVS-R instrument. Editing and coding is a manual data processing step through which coders review every case that contains at least one crime incident report or involves a respondent who self-identifies their race within the “Other-specify” category. Coders conduct a two-phase editing and coding review process that ensures all survey entries and incident summaries are aligned ([figure 3](#)). Identified issues, such as discrepancies between incident summaries and how survey items were answered, are

FIGURE 3
New NCVS instrument data processing steps



Note: In general, the post-data collection processing steps for the redesigned National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS-R) instrument have remained similar to the processing steps for the legacy instrument (NCVS-L). Some data processing steps have been moved up from a half-year basis to a monthly basis for the NCVS-R instrument (e.g., consistency edits and imputation). For details on the NCVS-L post-data collection processing steps, see [National Crime Victimization Survey, 2016: Technical Documentation](#) (NCJ 251442, BJS, December 2017). This technical documentation will be updated to reflect the redesigned instrument and 2026 sample redesign in the future.

*Industry and occupation coding occurs only when the respondent reported a workplace violence incident.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2026.

corrected or referred to Census Bureau NCVS subject matter experts for further review.

The remainder of the monthly data processing steps are conducted after editing and coding is complete. This includes the following steps, each of which had to be updated for the new instrument:

1. Reformatting and cleaning data as needed (e.g., extracting data from the editing and coding instrument and preparing them for subsequent processing steps);
2. Assigning industry and occupation codes for the respondent's line of work when the respondent reported a workplace violence incident;
3. Matching NCVS records to the unit control file to obtain more detailed geographic information;⁴
4. Range checks to ensure reported values are plausible;
5. Consistency edits (to ensure survey responses are internally consistent) and imputation;⁵
6. Blanking edits to ensure each case follows the correct skip patterns;
7. Assigning type of crime classifications;
8. Coding completed interviews and non-interviews; and
9. Period-to-period incident recounting to determine which reported crime incidents occurred in the month of the interview.⁶

⁴The unit control file is the Census Bureau database for all housing units in the sample. The file includes detailed information and operational outcomes for all NCVS sampled addresses.

⁵The Census Bureau's traditional, sequential hot-deck procedure is used to impute any remaining missing or rejected values for selected characteristics of interviewed and some non-interviewed persons. Individual characteristics imputed for interviewed and non-interviewed persons include age, sex, race, and Hispanic origin. Income, tenure, land use, and type of living quarters also are imputed for household interviews and/or non-interviews. Some other geographic variables may also be imputed when the sampled household unit lacks all census geography information (e.g., urbanicity, principal city status).

⁶Crimes that occur during the month of the interview technically fall outside the 6-month reference period and therefore are counted during the next interview period.

Once 6 months of data are available, the six consecutive monthly files are merged and processed through the half-year cycle, which includes the following steps:

1. Weighting adjustments to produce estimates of criminal victimization experienced by U.S. households and the U.S. population age 12 or older;
2. Implementing geographic and categorical recodes, as necessary, to meet disclosure avoidance requirements;
3. Producing data quality measures, including unit response rates and item nonresponse rates; and
4. Creating the half-year household-, person-, and incident-level data files.

Other NCVS program updates

In collaboration with the Census Bureau, BJS is also carrying out the 2026 sample redesign, which occurs once every 10 years. This sample redesign updates the first-stage sample of the NCVS to reflect changes in the U.S. population based on the 2020 decennial census.⁷ Concurrently, the NCVS sample was reduced by 10% in 2026 due to resource constraints. The phase-in of new primary sampling units began in 2025 and continues into 2026, while the phaseout of old primary sampling units occurs throughout 2026 and 2027.

Finally, to comply with the 2022 Better Cybercrime Metrics Act, BJS conducted large-scale testing to measure certain types of cybercrime across some of the NCVS supplemental surveys.⁸ As this work proceeds and contingent on resource availability, BJS will evaluate when and how to reintroduce [supplements](#)  into production. BJS plans to provide additional information and details on these efforts and the ongoing analysis of the redesign data as work progresses.

⁷For more information about the sample redesign, see <https://bjs.ojp.gov/ncvs-sample-design> .

⁸Better Cybercrime Metrics Act, Pub. L. No. 117–116, § 6, 136 Stat. 1180, 1181 (May 5, 2022).

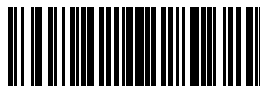


The Bureau of Justice Statistics of the U.S. Department of Justice is the principal federal agency responsible for measuring crime, criminal victimization, criminal offenders, victims of crime, correlates of crime, and the operation of criminal and civil justice systems at the federal, state, tribal, 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. Kevin M. Scott, PhD, is the acting director.

This report was written by Jennifer L. Truman, PhD, Rebecca Bielamowicz, PhD, and Rachel E. Morgan, PhD. Megan Ruhnke from the U.S. Census Bureau reviewed and contributed to this report.

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