



Bureau of Justice Statistics

Update on the NCVS Instrument Redesign: Juveniles Testing Efforts

June 9, 2022

1:00pm - 2:30pm ET

Agenda

- Introductions
- Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) Instrument Redesign
- Juveniles Testing Efforts
- Next Steps
- Resources
- Discussion



Background: NCVS Instrument Redesign

NCVS Instrument Redesign

- NCVS – nation’s primary source of information on criminal victimization
- BJS undertaking major, multi-year redesign of NCVS survey instruments
- Key focus to modernize survey content and organization, last done in 1992
- Working with Westat (under contract) and U.S. Census Bureau
- Instrument testing has included a pilot test, national field test, and multiple rounds of cognitive and usability testing
- Conducted online testing with RTI International for specific topics including measuring juvenile victimization and hate crime
- Instrument redesign covered in detail in BJS webinar *Update on the NCVS Instrument Redesign: Results from a National Field Test*



NCVS Redesign: Juveniles Testing Efforts

Impetus

- Why the focus on juveniles, persons ages 12-17?
- Youth make up a notable portion of the NCVS target population of persons ages 12 or older and are a key demographic of interest.
- Interviewing youth for a crime survey involves a unique set of issues that are important for ensuring quality data
 - Relative to adults, more steps are required to interview youth.
 - Youth may need wording changes or additional explanations or examples to understand or relate to crime-specific and other survey constructs.



Impetus ctd.

- As part of the instrument redesign, BJS worked to assess core issues related to interviewing youth for the NCVS and measuring youth victimization:
 - An ongoing decline in NCVS response rates for youth, reflecting issues with parental consent, youth assent, and youth availability
 - Ensuring youth comprehension of the redesigned instrument and the suitability of the instrument for youth
 - Assessing the quality of youth proxy data



Defining the Scope

- To better understand these issues, BJS worked with RTI to develop a set of analyses using NCVS data to examine several related areas, including
 - Response rates
 - Coverage rates
 - Proxy interview rates
 - Rates of missing data
 - Victimization rates
- The results of these analyses, as well as a prior literature review and assessments of other large-scale surveys of children and adolescents, informed planning for the juveniles testing efforts.



Testing Goals

- Evaluate comprehension and relevance of the redesigned NCVS instrument for youth
- Evaluate quality of data collected from youth
- Understand reasons for nonresponse and develop strategies for increasing youth participation
- Assess the efficacy of proxy reporting for youth



Juveniles Testing Efforts: RTI Presentation

Update on the NCVS Instrument Redesign: juveniles testing efforts

Improving participation, comprehension, and data quality and completeness among youth

Christine Lindquist, Chris Krebs, and Sarah Cook, *RTI International*
Grace Kena, Jennifer Truman, and Heather Brotsos, *Bureau of Justice Statistics*

June 9th, 2022

Research on juvenile participation in the NCVS - Overview

This project conducted a total of 353 virtual interviews

Two (2) phases of cognitive interviews:

- Cognitive Interviews: Phase 1 – 49 virtual interviews – 6 weeks (Summer 2020)
- Cognitive Interviews: Phase 2 – 57 virtual interviews – 4 weeks (Fall 2020)

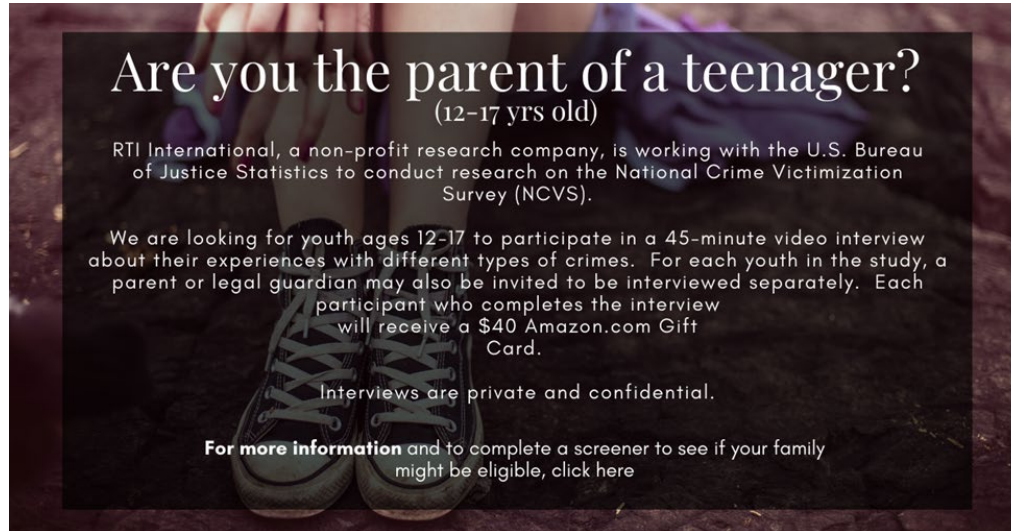
Two (2) rounds of parent interviews:

- Parent Interviews: Phase 1 – 34 virtual interviews – 2 weeks (Summer 2020)
- Parent Interviews: Phase 2 – 39 virtual interviews – 3 weeks (Fall 2020)

One (1) round of proxy interviews:

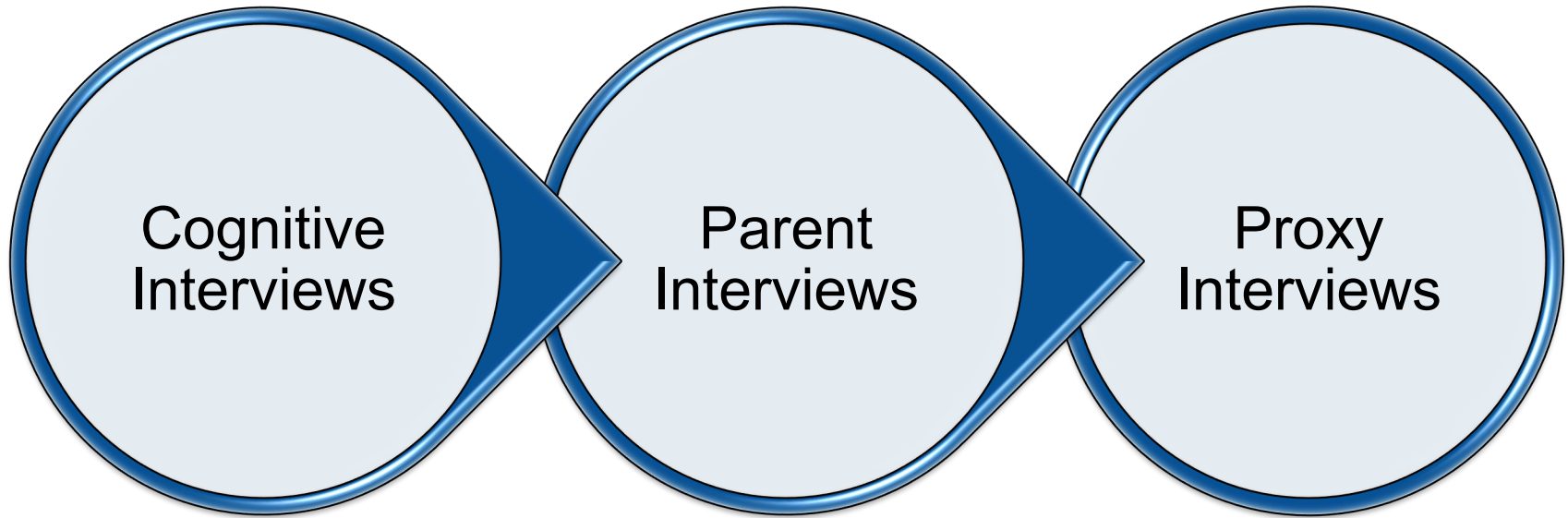
- Proxy Interviews – 182 virtual interviews (91 parent-child dyads) – 6 weeks (Fall 2020)

Recruitment procedures



- Social media advertisements placed on Facebook for parents
- Clicking on the ad took prospective participants' parents to an eligibility form
- Parents provided basic details for all youth (12-17) in the household
- Parents of selected youth were contacted by a recruiter
- Video interviews were then scheduled with youth and participating parents
- Parents electronically signed a consent form prior to any youth being interviewed
- Youth provided assent during their interview

Interviewing procedures



- Interviewers asked youth NCVS questions using a protocol with scripted probes
- Probes were designed to understand participants' cognitive processes
- Spontaneous probing was used when necessary

- Interviewers asked parents about their decision-making process (Phase 1) and to review a brochure and provide feedback (Phase 2)

- Parents and youth were scheduled to be interviewed at the same time
- Both parents and youth were asked the NCVS and questions
- Follow-up questions were asked at the end of the interview

Interview logistics

- Interviews conducted by experienced RTI staff:
 - Trained on interview protocol, handling emotional distress situations, logistics of virtual interviewing, standardized interviewing, etc.
- Interviews were conducted via video-interviewing through Zoom
- Both interviewers and participants were required to be in a private setting during the interview and keep their video on
- The interviews lasted about 45 minutes
- Participants were provided with a \$40 Amazon.com gift card

Proxy interviews: Victim interviews took longer than non-victim interviews, so parents and youth were told they each may receive different questions to mitigate suspicions if, for example, the youth interview took significantly longer than the parent interview.

Emotional distress

- RTI developed a Distress Respondent Protocol to monitor and to respond early to any participant distress. It included:
 - Periodic check-ins by interviewers (e.g., “How are you doing?”)
 - Training on verbal and non-verbal signs of emotional distress
 - Various strategies for responding to emotional distress
- Interviewers logged cases of emotional distress in a spreadsheet
- Interviewers were also encouraged to practice self-care and debrief difficult interviews with project leaders or other interviewers
- A total of 8 instances of emotional distress were recorded:
 - 4 juveniles (cognitive testing)
 - 3 parents + 1 juvenile (proxy interviews)

Cognitive testing with juveniles (12-17) in the NCVS

Youth interpretation and feedback on the NCVS questions

What is cognitive testing?



A method used in survey design to study how respondents think about and respond to questions, with an emphasis on examining problems or difficulties with this process



4 Stages of the Cognitive Survey Response Process (Tourangeau, 1984)

- Comprehension of question
- Retrieval of information
- Judgment process
- Response process



Cognitive Testing involves:

- Reading survey questions to volunteers
- Asking follow-up questions or probes to understand their cognitive process
- Identify ways to reduce errors

Goals for cognitive testing

Overall goal: Determine if question adaptations to the current field test version were needed for 12- to 17-year-old NCVS participants

Specific objectives

1. Determine reasons for difficulty and potential reasons for measurement error in question response for 12- to 17-year-olds:
 - Lack of question comprehension
 - Understanding of terminology
 - Lack of knowledge
 - Topic sensitivity
2. Identify revisions needed to the NCVS that would reduce measurement error in respondents ages 12-17

High-level takeaways

Sexual assault questions were the most sensitive

- In Round 2 of interviews, questions about the police were seen as sensitive to a few people as well

Difficulty answering questions related to timelines

- Learned in Round 1, and adjusted methods in Round 2
 - In Round 2, interviewers used national holidays, seasons, and school years as reference points

Thefts of household property were reported

- Ex. “My dad’s tools were stolen out of the garage.”

Some youth had difficulty answering questions related to work

- Some youth had started their first jobs and were not sure how to answer if they were unemployed in the past 12 months because they only recently became old enough to have a job.

Specific examples of findings

Attack Screener

S_06A

Original Question:

The next few questions ask about any physical attacks against you personally. These may have happened at your home or while you were (IF AGES 16+: at work,) at school, or away from home.

(IF ANY THEFT INCIDENTS WERE FLAGGED AS “ATTACK” IN PREVIOUS SECTIONS, SAY: Other than the attacks or threatened attacks you have already mentioned,) In the past 12 months, did anyone attack or try to attack you...

S_06A1-4		
S_06A1. With a weapon, such as a gun or knife?	Yes	No
S_06A2. With something else used as a weapon, like a baseball bat, scissors, or a stick?	Yes	No
S_06A3. By throwing something at you, such as a rock or bottle?	Yes	No
S_06A4. By hitting, slapping, grabbing, kicking, punching, or choking you?	Yes	No

Some youth included threats or incidents that were accidents or “play fighting” with friends or siblings.

As a result, we recommended the following text be added to the first paragraph here and to S_06A5:

“Do not include threats and do not include incidents that were accidental or when you knew someone was playing.”

Specific examples of findings

What Happened: Module SA (Unwanted Sexual Contact)

SA_1. In this particular incident...

- a. Did you have unwanted vaginal sex [IF MALE: with a woman]? Yes No
- b. Did you have unwanted oral or anal sex? [READ IF NEEDED: Oral sex means that someone put their mouth or tongue on a vagina, anus or penis. Anal sex is a man or boy putting his penis in someone else's anus.] Yes No
- c. Was there unwanted penetration of sexual body parts with a finger or object? Yes No
- d. Was there unwanted sexual contact, such as touching or kissing of sexual body parts, or grabbing, fondling, or rubbing up against you in a sexual way? Yes No

Some youth did not know what “penetration” meant, so we recommended a definition be added here and on SA_1f:

“[READ IF NEEDED: Penetration means that someone put a finger or object inside a sexual body part.]”

Specific examples of findings

Consequences I: Injury

CI7a. Where did you receive this care?

- 1. At your home or the home of a relative, friend, or neighbor**
- 2. At a hospital emergency room (ER) or an emergency clinic**
- 3. At some other kind of medical or dental place**
- 4. Somewhere else (SPECIFY) _____**

While interviewing juveniles, we became aware of the need to add a response option for being treated at school.

We recommended adding in a second response option:

“2 (IF UNDER 18: At school or on school property)”

Specific examples of findings

Location Series

LO4. Was it your school?

1 Yes

2 No

Some of our interviews took place in the summer or after a new school year began. As such, some students had questions about what we were asking.

Ex. “My current school or the school I was going to at the time, because I’m at a different school now?”

We recommended clarifying the question to ask:

“Was it your school at the time of the incident?”

Specific examples of findings

Victim-Offender Relationship

VO10. At the time of the incident, which of the following BEST describes how you knew the offender?

- 1 (IF AGES 16+) A spouse or ex-spouse**
- 2 Someone you were romantically involved with, dating, or casually seeing at the time of the incident**
- 3 An ex-boyfriend, ex-girlfriend, (IF AGES 16+: former fiancé), or someone you were no longer dating or seeing**
- 4 A relative**
- 5 Someone else**

Many of the offenders we heard about were friends or classmates.

Students had difficulty deciding how to categorize friends and classmates because they expected a category for them (not realizing these categories are about romantic/familial relationships)

We recommended revising the last response option to:

“5 Someone else such as a friend, acquaintance, (IF IN SCHOOL: classmate,) (IF 16+: co-worker) neighbor, or other non-relative”

Specific examples of findings

Police Ask-All Items

PQ3a. How respectfully do you think the police in your area treat people?

- 1. Very respectfully**
- 2. Somewhat respectfully**
- 3. Neither respectfully nor disrespectfully**
- 4. Somewhat disrespectfully**
- 5. Very disrespectfully**

Some participants had difficulty answering questions like these because they had limited or no interaction with police.

One participant heard “In your opinion” in a later question and suggested adding that here.

We recommended adding that preface to questions like these:

“In your opinion, how respectfully do you think the police in your area treat people?”

Conclusions

- The final report, NCVS Juvenile Testing and Redesign Report, includes many more recommendations.
<https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/bjs/grants/304100.pdf>
- Overall, the youth did very well at answering the NCVS questions.
- We believe we met our objectives and learned where and why accommodations for juveniles participating in the NCVS might be needed.

Proxy interviewing in the NCVS

Assessing the impact on victimization estimates

Background on proxy interviewing

- Proxy interviewing involves purposely interviewing someone other than the subject you initially set out to interview.
- The NCVS uses proxy interviewing when juvenile respondents in the household cannot be interviewed.
- Possible reasons or justifications for proxy interviewing include the youth being:
 - Not allowed to participate by the parent (for 12–13-year-olds only),
 - Physically/mentally unable to answer questions, or
 - Temporarily absent or unavailable and will not return before closeout.
- NCVS Technical Documentation:
https://bjs.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh236/files/media/document/ncvst_d16.pdf

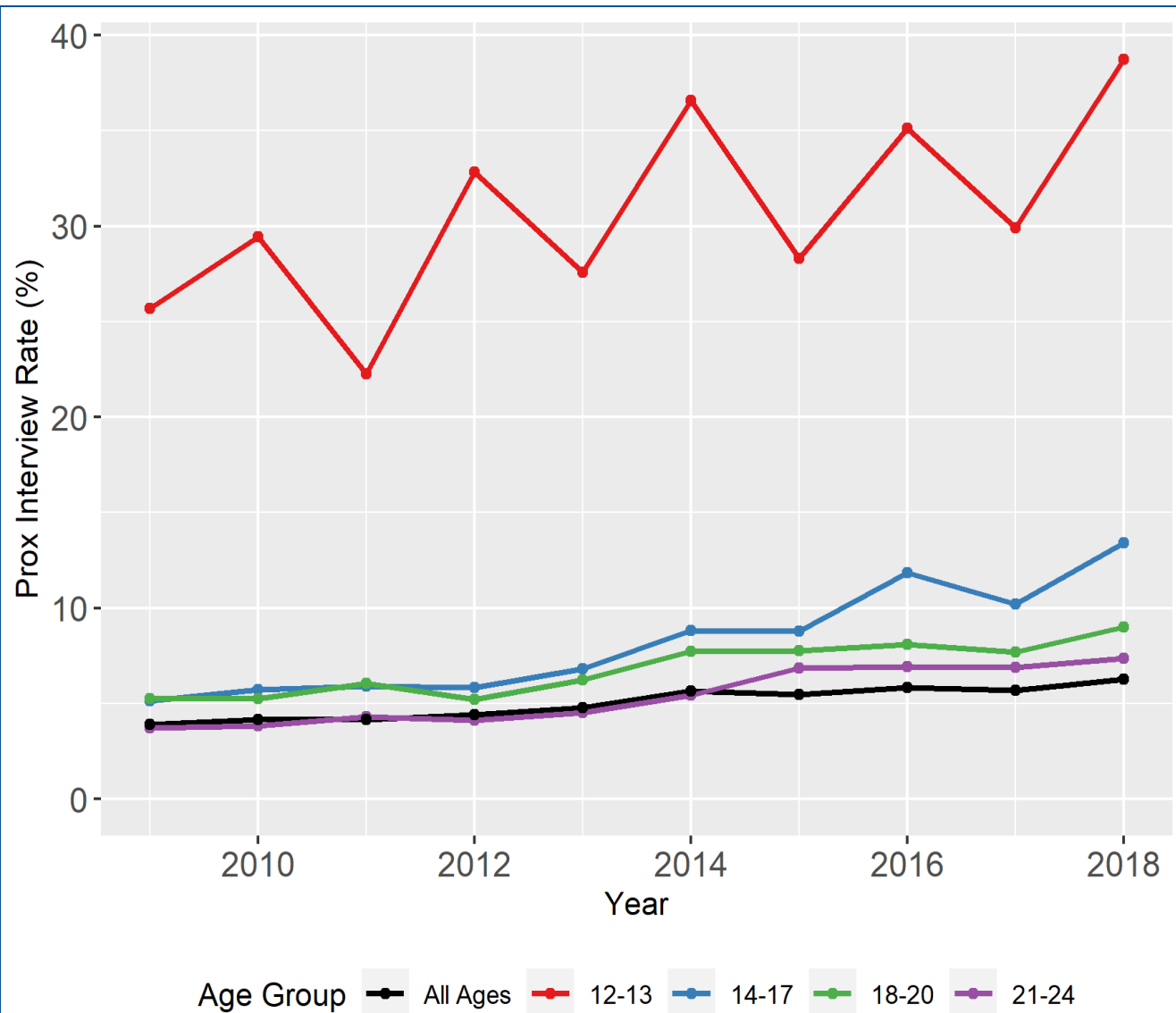
Assessing the efficacy of proxy interviewing

Overall goal: Assess the efficacy of parent (proxy) reporting by comparing victimization rates produced from parent (proxy) interviews with those produced from child self-report interviews

- NCVS victimization rates tend to be significantly lower for parent (proxy) interviews than youth self-reported victimization rates.
- Increases in the rates of proxy interviewing over time creates some concern about how this impacts the validity and accuracy of victimization rates.

Assumption: The child's report is the "gold standard" against which the accuracy of the parent (proxy) report will be evaluated.

Proxy interviewing rate over time, by age group



- For 12-13 year-olds, being too young is the primary reason given for proxy interviewing (~87%)
- For 14+ year-olds, the youth being absent or unavailable is the primary reason (~70%)

Proxy study methods

- Interviews with parents and youth were scheduled to take place at the same time to ensure data integrity and interview independence
- Children were asked to report on their own victimization experiences, and parents were asked to report on their child's experiences to the best of their knowledge
 - Theft, Physical Attack, Sexual Assault
- We conducted 182 proxy interviews with 91 parent-child pairs (dyads) over a 5.5-week period in Fall 2020

Demographics of child survey participants

Demographic characteristics		Total		
		Count	Percent	
TOTAL		91	100	%
Child Sex				
	Male	51	56	%
	Female	39	43	
	Other	1	1	
Age				
	12	20	22	%
	13	12	13	
	14	18	20	
	15	16	18	
	16	11	12	
	17	14	15	

Child survey participant demographics and victimization type

Demographic characteristics		Total		
		Count	Percent	
TOTAL		91	100	%
Race/Ethnicity				
	Hispanic	17	19	%
	White	64	70	
	Black	35	38	
	Other	10	10	
	More than one race	21	23	
Household Income				
	Below \$30,000	24	26	%
	Above \$30,000	63	69	
	Prefer not to say	4	5	
Most Serious Victimization (Recruited)				
	Theft	10	10	%
	Physical Attack	14	15	
	Sexual Assault	11	12	
	None	56	62	

Illustration of analytic approach - McNemar's test

		Parent reports child experiencing victimization		
		Yes	No	
Child reports experiencing victimization	Yes	Congruence	False negative	% victimized according to child
	No	False positive	Congruence	
		% victimized according to parent		p-value

Recruitment-Related Communications in the NCVS

Parent perspectives on increasing youth participation

NCVS challenges in recruiting juveniles

Recruiting juveniles for a crime survey can be challenging, due to

- Parental refusal
- Youth refusal
- Lack of a youth's availability to participate in the interview

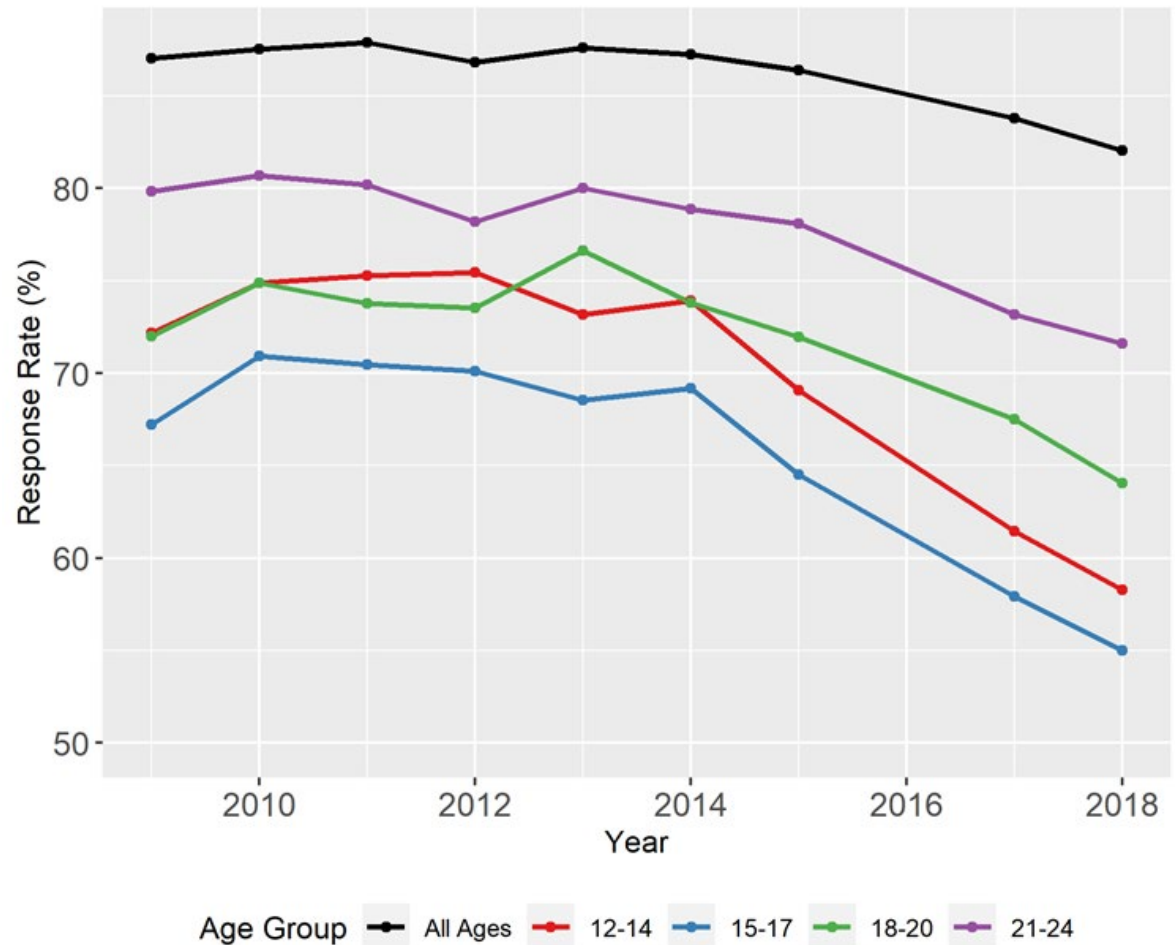
The NCVS approaches recruiting juveniles by

- Recruiting household (lead letter + field representative follow-up)
- In-person visit from field representative
 - Adult lists all household members age 12 and older
 - Each person who is home is then interviewed privately
- If needed, some household member interviews (and second through seventh interviews) done over phone
- Proxy interviewing allowed for 12- and 13-year-olds

Declining NCVS response rates, especially for youth 15-17

For years, youth participation in the NCVS has been declining

Low response rates could result in nonresponse bias and measurement error



Goals of the “recruitment communications” task

Overall goal: Identify potential improvements to NCVS methods and materials for recruiting adults and youth

Specific objectives

1. Develop a better understanding of parent concerns regarding youth participation in the NCVS, based on current NCVS procedures (**Phase 1**)
2. Based on this feedback, design a new recruitment brochure targeted specifically at parents of youth ages 12–17
3. Seek parent feedback on this brochure and understand additional concerns (**Phase 2**)

Interview content

Phase 1 interviews (n=34):

- Focus on parents' thought process in allowing their child to participate, their concerns, and what materials would assist in decision making
- The interviewer described the NCVS recruitment and data collection procedures and asked questions to elicit participant feedback about each step in the outreach and recruitment process

Phase 2 interviews (n=39):

- Focus on sharing recruitment materials with parents to solicit feedback on specific aspects of the materials that would make them more (or less) likely to allow their child to participate in the NCVS
- The interviewer screen shared existing NCVS recruitment materials (e.g., lead letter, a Q&A document, existing brochure)
- The interviewer shared the new brochure for parents that included additional information about youth participation
- The interviewer asked questions about the effectiveness of the brochure, plus additional questions about recruitment and scheduling

Draft brochure that was tested

Why is my child's participation important?

Youth participation in the NCVS is extremely important!

NCVS data provide crucial information about a range of topics, including crime and safety in schools and communities, trends in violent and property crime and the response of law enforcement to reports of victimization.

Regardless of whether or not your child has experienced crime, their participation in the NCVS can help researchers and public officials in your community and beyond better understand and address crimes against youth.

Your child's responses not only represent your household, but also hundreds of other similar households that are not surveyed.

Your child's participation contributes to local and national research and policy:

- Law enforcement, judicial, correctional and victim service agencies use NCVS data to improve their effectiveness and planning.
- The U.S. Department of Education uses NCVS data to measure the prevalence and nature of student victimizations at and away from school.
- Researchers use NCVS data to study trends in criminal victimization across geographic areas and demographic groups.

Recent NCVS Publications



Youth Participation in the

2020

National Crime Victimization Survey

For more information about the National Crime Victimization Survey, please visit:

www.census.gov/programs-surveys/ncvs.html

For questions about youth participation in the NCVS, please contact:

505-566-5989
NCVS@Census.gov



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Draft brochure that was tested (continued)

The National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS)

What is the National Crime Victimization Survey?

The National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) is a nationwide survey designed to obtain detailed information about experiences of criminal victimization, including theft, burglary, motor vehicle theft, robbery, assault and rape. The NCVS involves interviews of households scientifically sampled from all 50 states and the District of Columbia. All household members ages 12 and older are invited to participate in a series of interviews.

What is the purpose of the NCVS?

The purpose of the NCVS is to collect nationally representative information about criminal victimization. Unlike other national data collections on crime, the NCVS includes all experiences of criminal victimization both reported and not reported to the police.

Who conducts the NCVS?

The NCVS is conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau with funding from the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) of the U.S. Department of Justice. The Census Bureau collects, edits, and processes the information. BJS conducts data analyses and publishes final results.

What will my child be asked to do?



As with the adults in your household, all children ages 12-17 will be invited to participate in the NCVS.



Each participating youth will be asked to take part in a series of one-on-one interviews.



Interviewers will ask about crimes the youth has experienced.



Interviews take, on average, 25 minutes to complete and are conducted with participating children once every six months for three years.



Interviews can be completed in-person or by phone.



Interviewers are Census Field Representatives who have undergone background checks.



Participation in the NCVS is voluntary. Permission from a parent or guardian is required for youth.

How will my child's data be used?

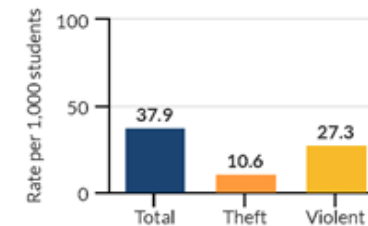
Will my child be identified?

All information provided by your child will be kept confidential. The Census Bureau and the Bureau of Justice Statistics are prohibited by federal law from releasing your child's responses in any way that could allow them to be identified.

What will be done with my child's data?

Your child's NCVS data will be stripped of all personally identifying information (e.g., name, address) and compiled with data provided by other participants into a final data set. This data set will be analyzed by the BJS and released to the public for use in statistical research. The chart below is an example of how NCVS data are used:

Rate of Victimization Against Students Aged 12 - 14 by Type of Victimization in 2017



Phase 1 findings

- Parents agreed that a brochure highlighting the importance of youth participation in the NCVS could be helpful and increase participation
 - Some parents indicated they and their children would read such a brochure
- Specific recommendations for content included:
 - The purpose of the study
 - The funding agency
 - How the data would be used (how personal data would be protected, what would be presented in NCVS reports)
 - Impact of the NCVS data collection (e.g., helping one's community, how NCVS statistics have been used)

Phase 2 findings: brochure

- Positive reactions to the new brochure
- Separate brochures for parents and youth (or a youth-focused section) were recommended
- Ideas for improving the brochure design were provided:
 - Brighter colors, eye-catching graphics, more casual fonts, bullets or icons for youth-focused components
- Content improvements were provided:
 - More emphasis on study importance, confidentiality, how information will be used, and background checks
 - Brochure should offer avenues for obtaining more information (e.g., web links, QR codes, social media links)
 - Links to example questions (or more detail about topics)

Phase 2 findings: other communication

- Social media presence could help with recruitment
 - Parents and youth visit different platforms; content would need to be customized
- Direct contact with children (e.g., texting by field rep to schedule interviews) should only be attempted with the parent included on any communication
 - This should also come after the parent has developed a rapport with interviewer and provided permission
- Alternative modes (e.g., web-based surveys for older youth, videoconferencing) would be acceptable to parents and more appealing to youth

Conclusions and Recommendations

- A well-designed brochure could increase youth participation
- Some of the specific recommendations provided by parents should help to maximize the utility of this brochure
- BJS should explore the potential of social media to convey additional information about the NCVS, but would need to be clear about parent- and youth-focused platforms and content
- Offering the NCVS in alternative data collection modes might also help increase youth (and adult) participation

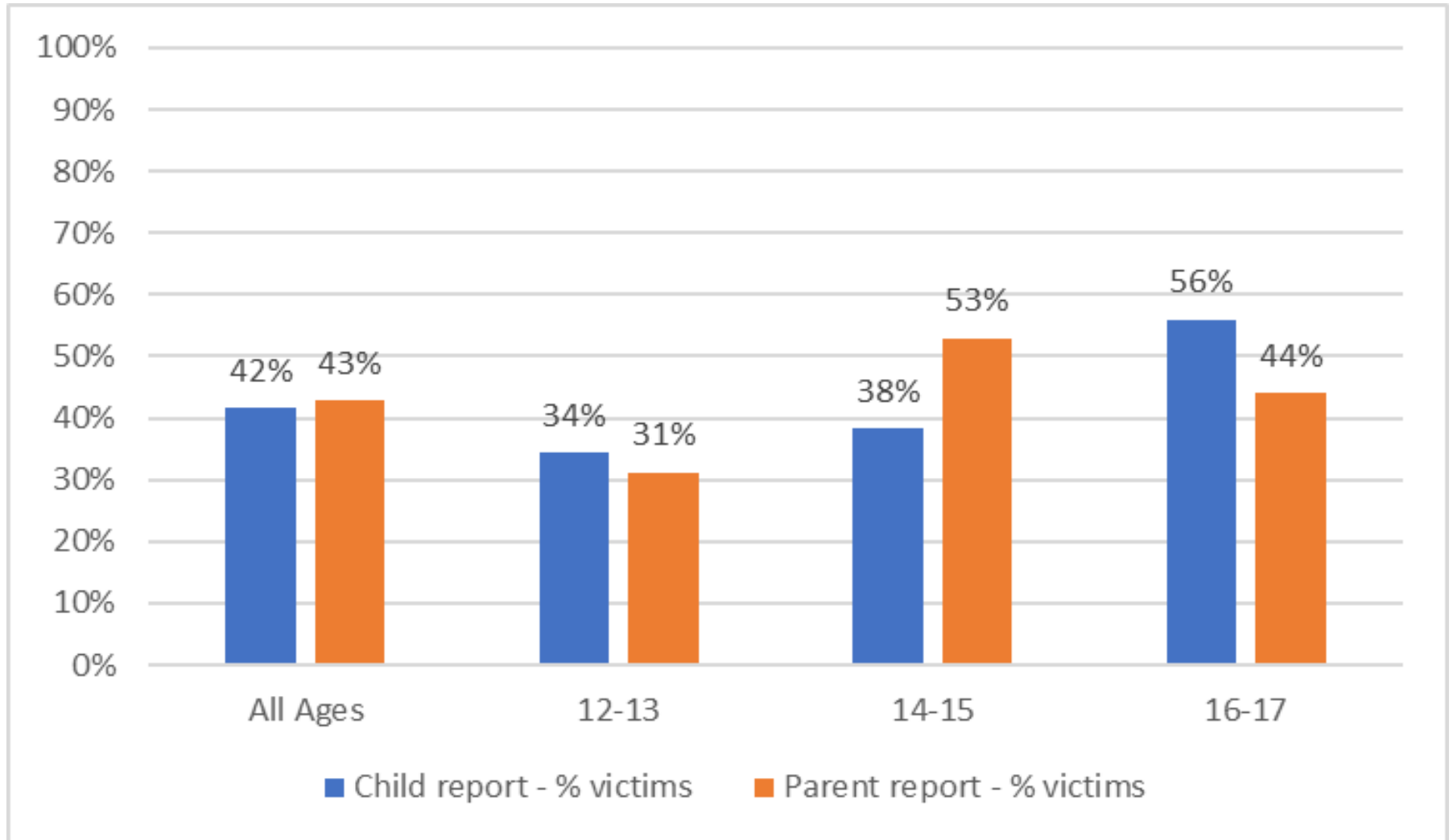
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		% victimized according to parent		p-value

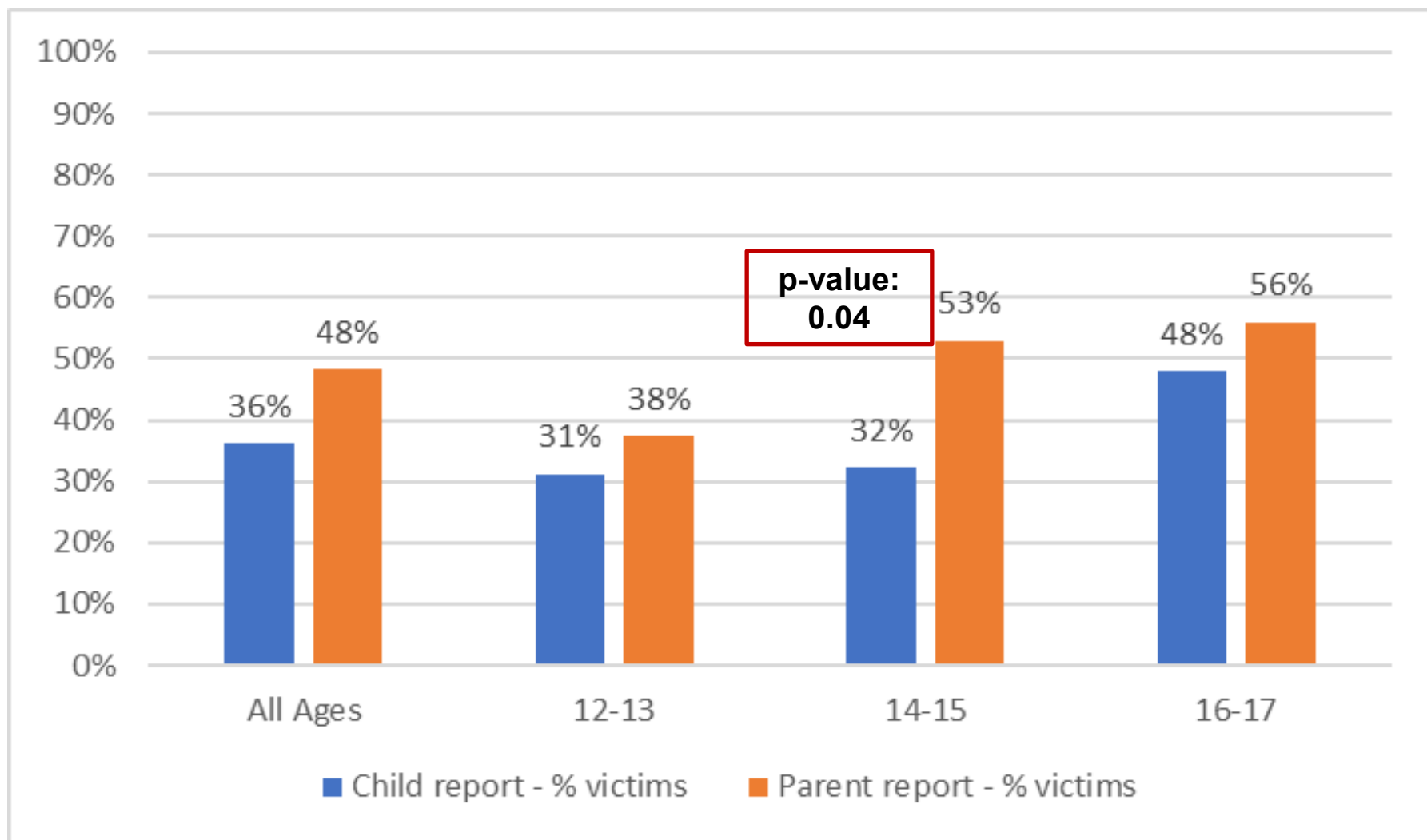
Example of McNemar's test for Theft, all ages

		Parent reports child experiencing victimization		
		Yes	No	
Child reports experiencing victimization	Yes	24 (26.4%)	14 (15.4%)	38 (41.8%)
	No	15 (16.5%)	38 (41.8%)	
		39 (42.9%)		p-value: 0.85

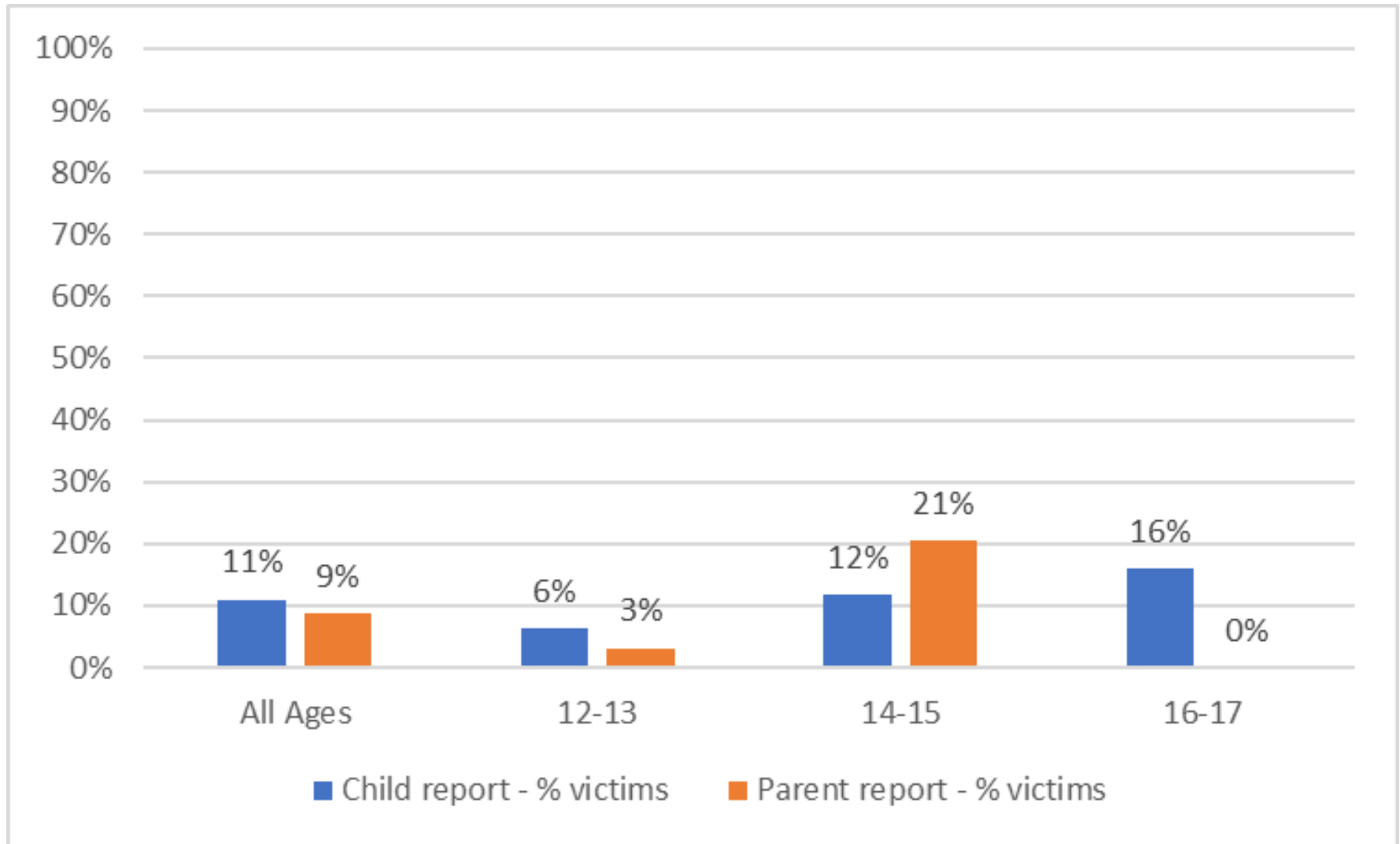
Percentage of children and parents who reported Theft



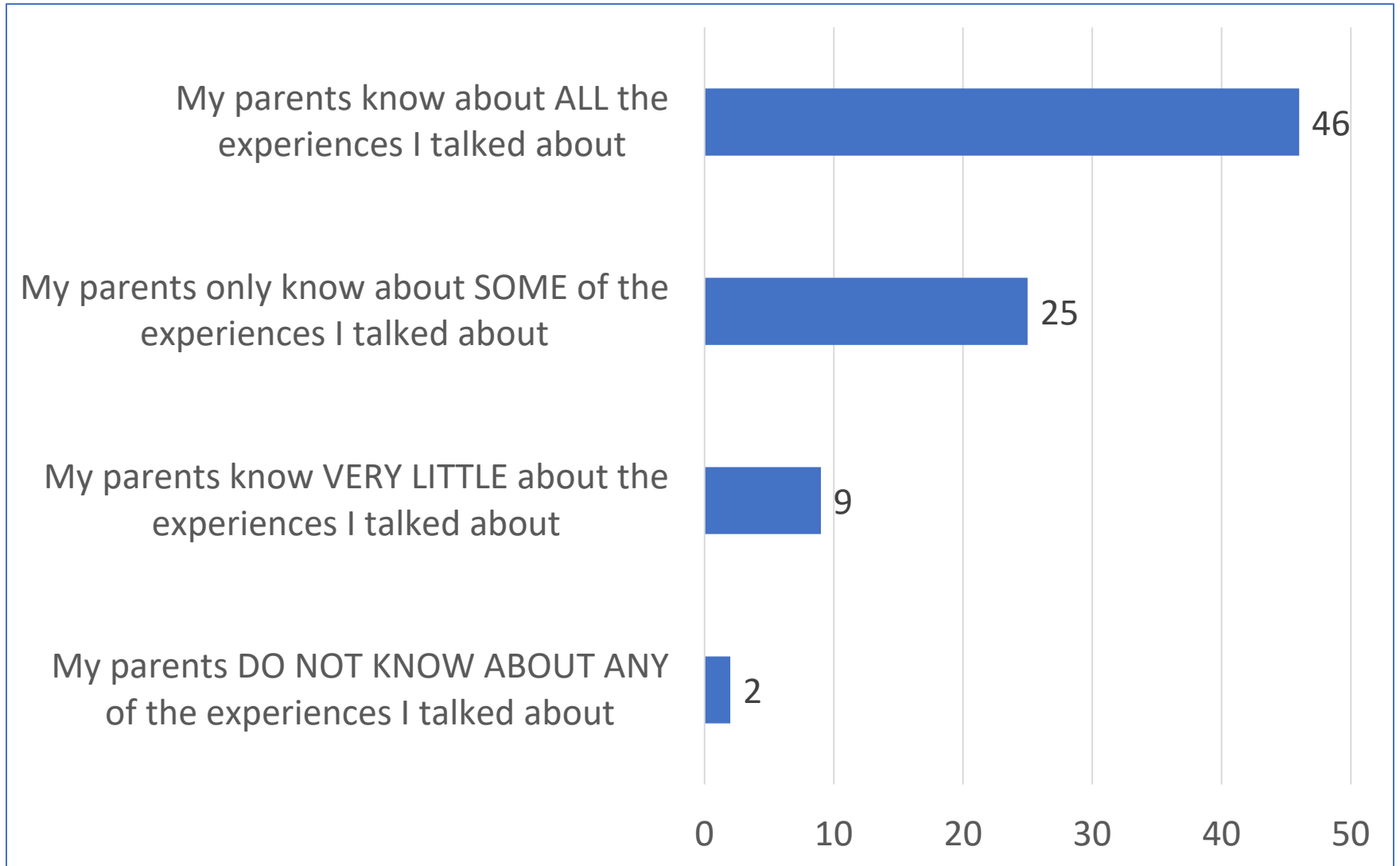
Percentage of children and parents who reported Physical Attack



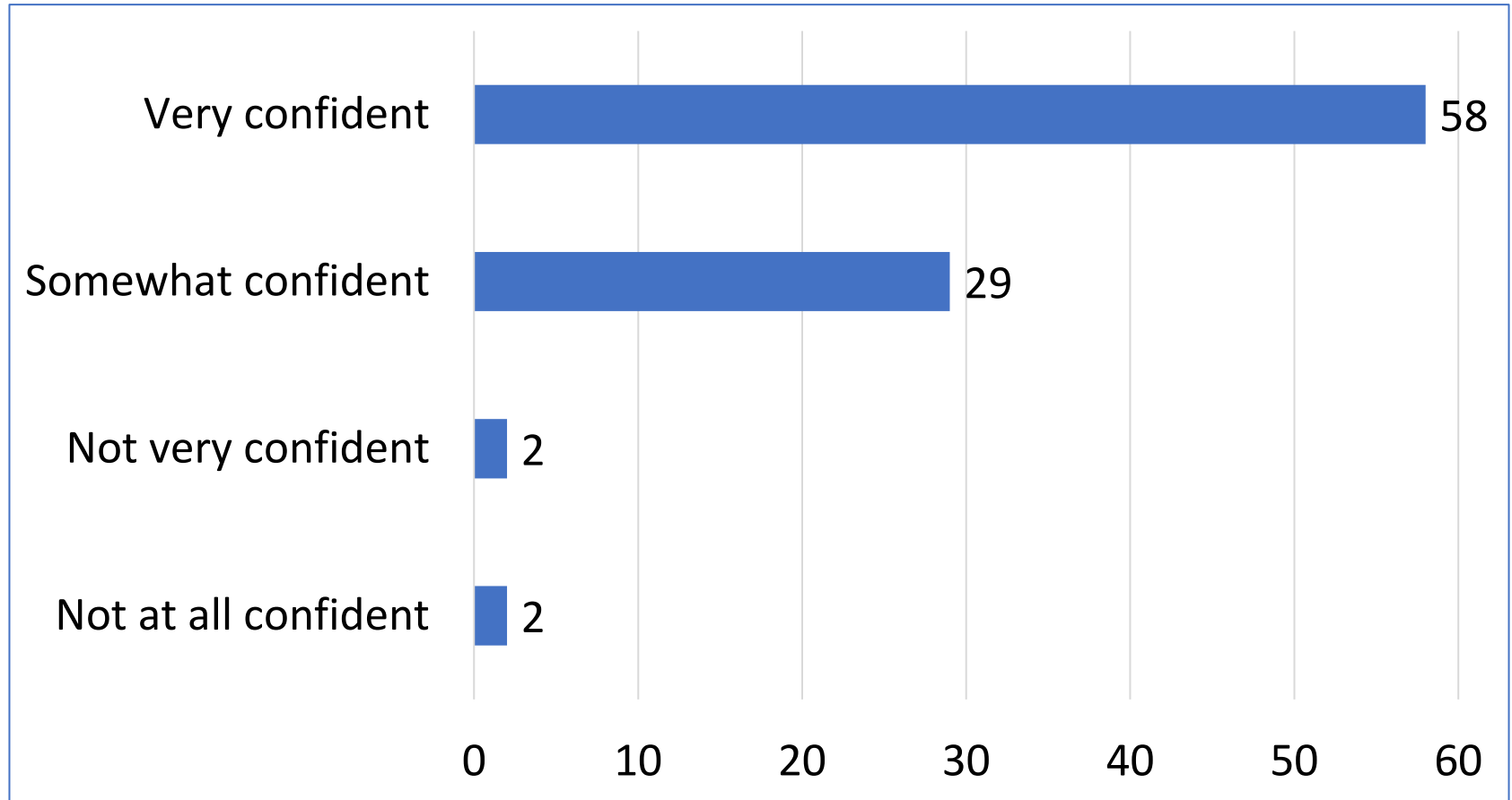
Percentage of children and parents who reported Sexual Assault



Debrief: When asked if parent knows about child's victimization experiences



Debrief: Parents' confidence in their answers



Some notes and caveats about the research

- The small sample size within each age group and low prevalence of most crime types reduce the statistical power of comparisons within each age group
- The analytic approach does not test for congruence within parent-child pairs (dyads)
- We also looked at agreement between child and parents in terms of the number of incidents, most serious victimization type experienced, and incident characteristics – similar findings
- Expected to find underreporting by parents, but did not expect to find overreporting – 2 possible explanations for this

Conclusions

- Comparisons of parent and child interview data generally revealed that aggregate estimates of children's victimization status are similar when generated by parent (proxy) reports
 - Exception: Physical Attack among 14- and 15-year-olds
- Interviewing youth directly should always be the goal/priority
- However, given the challenges associated with interviewing children in this age group, a proxy report is preferable to a nonresponse

Juveniles Testing Efforts: Next Steps

Next Steps

- Instrument
 - Following the cognitive testing, BJS assessed and discussed youth-specific changes to incorporate into Post-Field Test version of the NCVS instrument
 - Some changes also incorporated globally for all age groups
- Communications
 - BJS working with RTI on youth-focused communications materials and resources
- Proxy interviews
 - BJS not currently considering major changes to NCVS proxy interview procedures
- Contact procedures
 - BJS assessing potential changes to contact procedures for juvenile respondents



Resources

- Learn more about the NCVS Instrument Redesign and the research on juveniles at <https://bjs.ojp.gov/programs/ncvs/instrument-redesign>.
- Learn more about the NCVS at <https://bjs.ojp.gov/programs/ncvs>.
- Stay up-to-date with BJS at <https://bjs.ojp.gov/subscribe>.



Discussion

Questions?

Email us at:

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or askBJS@usdoj.gov



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