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Cognitive Pretesting of the
National Crime Victimization Survey
Supplemental Victimization Survey

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Abstract

At the request of the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), the Center for Survey Measurement (CSM) conducted cognitive testing of the redesign of the 2016 National Crime Victimization Survey's Supplemental Victimization Survey (NCVS SVS). The supplement is used to collect data on stalking victimization. Questions measure the prevalence, characteristics, and consequences of nonfatal stalking. The purpose of this cognitive research was to test new and revised questions for the 2016 NCVS Supplemental Victimization Survey instrument. The pretesting placed additional emphasis on the designing and performance of the supplement's screener questions, which are used to identify victims of stalking for the detailed battery of follow-up questions. The results of these cognitive interviews helped inform the final version of the SVS questionnaire, which was administered in 2016. This report presents the findings and resulting recommendations from the sixty cognitive interviews that CSM conducted between September 2015 and November 2015.

The findings from this study indicate that the original questions for the NCVS SVS generally performed well. Most questions were easy for interviewers to administer, and easy for respondents to understand and answer. These questions required no revisions. Of those questions that required revisions, most were minor modifications. For example, ten questions were changed from a mark-all format to a forced choice yes/no format. This was done because research shows that the forced choice format performs better than the mark-all format with certain types of questions (Smyth, Dillman, Christian, & Stern 2006). One question was particularly problematic and difficult to fix. The question was used to determine whether the unwanted contacts and behaviors reported by the respondent were related. Respondents had difficulty processing what the question was asking due to the length of the question and the inclusion of multiple concepts (i.e., "committed by the same person/people *or* by others on behalf of that person/people," [emphasis added]). Some also had difficulty with the concept of 'related' incidents when their experiences included both multiple incidents and multiple perpetrators.

Keywords: National Crime Victimization Survey, screening questions, cognitive interviews, measurement error

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents findings from the cognitive testing of the redesigned 2016 Supplemental Victimization Survey (SVS), a supplement to the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS). Researchers conducted 60 cognitive interviews over five iterative rounds of testing. Respondents included 21 victims of stalking, and 39 individuals who have not experienced stalking (see Section 5.1.1 Respondent selection for recruitment details). One of the changes from the 2006 to the 2016 SVS administration is the inclusion of minors. The sample included twenty 16 and 17 year olds to ensure the questions worked well for teens as well as adults.

The findings from this study indicate that the original questions for the NCVS SVS generally performed well. Most questions were easy for interviewers to administer, and easy for respondents to understand and answer. These questions required no revisions. Of those questions that required revisions, most were minor modifications.

With the inclusion of teens in the 2016 sample, the sponsors were concerned about the possibility of teens incorrectly screening in to the survey. They wanted to assess the potential for teens to become false positives as the result of reporting normative parental tracking and monitoring as unwanted contacts and behaviors in the screener. Findings from this study indicate that while such false positive are possible, they are highly unlikely. All but one teen were able to distinguish between normative parental behaviors and the unwanted contacts and behaviors asked about in the context of other typical stalking behaviors.

Question SQ7 was the most problematic question, and was difficult to fix. This question is used to determine whether the contacts and behaviors reported in SQ1 were related; that is, were they committed by the same person/people or by others on behalf of that person/people. If the respondent says that the behaviors were not related, they are screened out of the survey, as a series of unrelated unwanted contacts and behaviors do not constitute stalking. The question was revised three times during this study. Each version of the question caused issues for at least some of the respondents who answered it; they had trouble correctly interpreting what the question was asking, which made it difficult to answer the question correctly in regards to their experiences. Question SQ7 is critical in deciding who is screened into and out of the survey. Therefore, any possible source of respondent confusion is problematic. After the cognitive testing had concluded, the sponsors decided to remove question SQ7 to avoid incorrectly screening victims of stalking out of the survey.

One major set of changes occurred when ten questions in the Incident Questions section were changed from a mark-all format to a forced choice yes/no format. The original questions and response options worked well to measure the concepts of interest. However, research shows that the forced choice format performs better than the mark-all format with certain types of questions (Smyth, Dillman, Christian, & Stern 2006). The changes were made to improve the quality of the data collected.

The Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) is adding a series of demographic questions on sexual orientation and gender identity, veteran status, citizenship, and disability to the NCVS. Most of the questions come from existing government surveys, and have been cognitively tested with

adults. Since the research is still growing on measuring sexual orientation and gender identity, and the questions have only been tested with adults; we used this opportunity to cognitively test the questions with teenagers for the first time, and to collect additional data on how the questions work with adults. Both teens and adults were able to understand and easily answer the questions. Almost all respondents identified as straight while none identified as transgendered individuals. These questions would benefit from additional cognitive testing with LGBTQ teenagers.

The screener questions for the main NCVS questionnaire were not part of our focus in this study. The questions were included in this study to provide some context for the new demographic questions, including sexual orientation and gender identity, and to test the placement of these questions in the context of the NCVS. After receiving unsolicited respondent feedback, we identified some issues with the questions, indicating that they could benefit from additional cognitive testing and possibly revision. This report also includes a discussion of findings for some of the demographic questions that were included for context, but were outside of the scope of this project.

2 INTRODUCTION

At the request of the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), the Center for Survey Measurement (CSM) conducted cognitive testing of the National Crime Victimization Survey's Supplemental Victimization Survey (SVS). The SVS has only been administered once in 2006. It is currently being redesigned before being fielded in 2016. The supplement is used to collect data on stalking victimization. Questions measure the prevalence, characteristics, and consequences of nonfatal stalking.

Researchers conducted five iterative rounds of cognitive testing. The purpose of this cognitive research was to test new and revised questions for the 2016 NCVS Supplemental Victimization Survey instrument. The results of these cognitive interviews will help inform the final version of the SVS questionnaire, which will be administered in 2016. This report presents the findings from the sixty cognitive interviews that CSM conducted between September 2015 and November 2015.

3 BACKGROUND

The National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) is a self-report survey collected annually by the Census Bureau on behalf of the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS). Approximately 90,000 households in the United States, totaling 160,000 persons are sampled and asked about their experiences with victimization over the past six months. The survey is completed by persons age 12 or older, and provides data on the characteristics of crime, the offender, and the victim's experience with the criminal justice system after a crime occurs. Eligible participants are interviewed every six months, and remain in the sample for three years.

In 2006, the SVS was fielded as a supplement to NCVS for six months to examine the prevalence and characteristics of non-fatal stalking in the United States. The survey was administered to approximately 65,270 persons age 18 or older. In 2015, a Technical Review Panel was held by the Bureau of Justice Statistics to examine existing research on stalking and the use of the 2006

SVS. As a result, several limitations arose from the discussion. The 2016 revision of the SVS will address the use of technology in stalking behaviors and the way in which stalking is defined.

4 LITERATURE REVIEW

The 2006 NCVS SVS was the largest national survey on stalking in the United States. As the nation's primary resource on stalking data at the time, it revealed that stalking victims experience seven types of unwanted contacts or behaviors by their perpetrators (Baum & Catalano, 2009). Since collection, data from the NCVS SVS has been used by researchers, policymakers, victim advocates, and law enforcement to inform the general public on the seriousness of stalking. Texas modeled their crime victimization survey after NCVS as well as the 2006 stalking supplement to produce state-level estimates (Kercher & Johnson, 2009).

One of the main strengths about the 2006 survey is that it did not ask respondents to self-identify as stalking victims. There was also no mention of the word stalking until the final question. Unwanted contacts or behaviors can be so complex in nature that they are difficult to categorize and define.

4.1 Fear Standard

One important issue facing available stalking research is the inconsistency in the way in which stalking may be defined (Nobles, Fisher, & Fox, 2011). Criminologists, policymakers, and psychologists may differ about what types of victim and pursuit behavior constitutes stalking. Due to these varying definitions, the methods employed to measure stalking may vary as well. The requirement of an emotional reaction exhibiting fear is consistent amongst legislation in many jurisdictions in the United States. Section 40002(a) of the Violence Against Women Act of 1994 (42 U.S.C. 13925(a)) defines stalking as "engaging in a course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to feel fear". In the 2005 reauthorization of the VAWA, the definition of stalking was updated and expanded to include behaviors that cause the victim to feel fear *or* substantial emotional distress. The full definition is as follows:

“The term ‘stalking’ means engaging in a course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to—

‘(A) fear for his or her safety or the safety of others;

or

‘(B) suffer substantial emotional distress,’” (H. R. 3402-8).

Some researchers challenge the fear requirement, questioning at what point fear must be present for the respondent to acknowledge that stalking has taken place.

Fear on the victim's behalf may not only occur at onset, but may also progress over time. "Measuring fear in the context of stalking creates an additional hurdle in that stalking is a crime of repeated victimization. Therefore, the determinants of fear may be dynamic and changing over the course of time" (Englebrecht & Reynolds, 2012 p. 789). Victims' definitions for stalking may not always be in agreement with researchers definition of the crime. In the National Violence Against Women survey, 12% of women, and 6% of men who self-identified as talking victims did not

report being fearful enough of their unwanted contacts, and therefore did not meet the legal definition requirements (Englebrecht & Reynolds, 2012). Various demographics such as one's marital status, race, and age can play a role in one's level of fear. For example, married women are less likely to report the fear standard than their single counterparts.

Englebrecht and Reynolds (2012) recommend that future stalking research explore the different fear time frames and examine how the fear factor changes over time. The fear time frame may impact how the victim views their offender's behavior as there may be a correlation between stalking frequency and victim's perceived seriousness of these events. Because stalking victims may not initially acknowledge the seriousness of unwanted contacts and behaviors, the fear standard can complicate and underestimate the percentage of stalking victims. The level of fear can be measured on a continuum. The 2006 administration of the NCVS SVS asked respondents if they were fearful of their offender's actions, but it did not assess their level of fear.

4.2 Technology & Cyberstalking

The use of the internet, mobile communications, and participation in social networks are various forms of communication that many people use on a daily basis. The use of technology to foster stalking behaviors has increased over time (Reynolds, Fischer, Fox, & Nobles, 2014). They allow an offender to contact their victim, or monitor their victim's behavior without physically being present. Installing spyware or viruses on a computer or cellphone, or attaching a GPS monitoring system/software to a car are modern forms of stalking behavior.

A weakness of the 2006 SVS is that it did not include self-protective behaviors for those who experience cyberstalking, and the subsequent costs to the victim. Through daily use of social media, perpetrators may harm individuals by posting or threatening to post private photos, talking negatively about the victim online, or sending unwanted emails. Victims of cyberstalking may feel forced to block their perpetrator from contacting them through social media and email, or avoid social media altogether. These types of behaviors may lead victims to hiring technology specialists to examine their phones, laptops, or cars for bugs.

4.3 Victim-Offender Relationship

Very little is known about the victim-offender relationship. Most victims know their stalker. Data collected from the 2006 NCVS SVS shows that 3 out of 4 victims know their offender to some degree. To understand more about stalking behaviors, the context of the victim-offender relationship is important. Victims most often reported that their stalker was a current or former spouse or girlfriend/boyfriend. The victim's relationship to their stalker also influenced whether or not they perceived their unwanted contacts or behaviors as stalking. Learning more about the victim-offender relationship can also yield more research on proxy stalking (when an offender solicits another individual to help them stalk their victim), which is common, but difficult to measure (NIJ Stalking Workshop, 2010).

Lastly, more recent research suggests that stalking behaviors occur amongst youth (Englebrecht & Reynolds, 2014) and not just adults. While the NCVS survey includes respondents under the age of 18, the SVS does not. Due to the lack of research on this population, it is unknown what type of

self-protective actions and decision-making processes those under 18 utilize to cope with unwanted contacts or behaviors they experience.

5 STUDY METHODOLOGY

This study consisted of five rounds of cognitive interviews. An iterative methodology was used to identify and address problematic questions at the end of each round. After completing all of their scheduled interviews in a round, each interviewer provided the project lead with a summary of their interviews. These summaries included information on which questions were difficult for interviewers to administer, which questions respondents had trouble comprehending or answering, and a description of why those questions were problematic for the respondents.

The project lead used these summaries to identify which questions needed revisions and drafted recommendations for new question wording. These recommendations were presented to the sponsor for their approval in an update meeting or teleconference following each round. Approved changes were incorporated into an updated version of the protocol to be used in the following round.

This iterative method allowed us to assess whether or not the revised question wording addressed the problems interviewers were observing during the previous round of interviews. Question revisions that did not perform well could then be changed and re-tested again in the next round of interviews.

5.1 Data Collection

From September to November 2015, 58 face-to-face and two phone cognitive interviews were conducted in the Washington D.C. metropolitan area across five iterative rounds of cognitive testing. The cognitive interviewing team for these interviews consisted of nine CSM staff members. Results from each round informed any changes made to questions tested in the subsequent round. The fifth and final round of testing was then conducted to assess whether or not all revised questions perform as expected.

5.1.1 Respondent Selection

During recruitment, we targeted respondents who represented a variety of demographic characteristics, comprising race, gender, and age. Recruitment efforts concentrated on finding some individuals who had experienced stalking within the past three years. Some respondents were referred to us by organizations that assist victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking. Recruitment methods also consisted of advertisements through Craigslist.com, a broadcast message sent to all U.S. Census Bureau employees who work in the headquarters, and through personal contacts. All interviews were conducted in person in the local metropolitan area (i.e., D.C., Maryland, and Virginia). Each respondent received \$40 cash to compensate them for their travel time.

5.1.1.1 Victims

For the purpose of this study, we use the term “victims” to refer to individuals who screened into the NCVS Supplemental Victimization Survey incident questions. Respondents screened into the incident questions if their answers to the SVS screener questions fit the criteria for stalking victimization. To meet the criteria, respondents had to report experiencing either one unwanted contact or behavior repeatedly or multiple unwanted contacts or behaviors, the contacts had to cause actual fear in the respondent or have characteristics that would reasonably cause most individuals to experience fear, and at least some of the contacts and behaviors had to be committed by the same person or group of people working together.

It is important to note that some individuals who screened into the survey as victims may not self-identify as a victim of stalking, and others may prefer to use a term other than victim (such as survivor) when referring to their situation. The decision to use the terms victim and non-victim when referring to the two groups of respondents was made to easily and clearly distinguish between those who did screen in to the survey and those who did not.

A total of 21 victim respondents were selected to participate in the research study. Table 1 shows the original recruitment goals for victims broken down by age and sex, the modified goals that were changed due to recruitment difficulties, and the final number of completed interviews for each group.

Table 1. Recruitment Goals for Victims

	Victims		
	Original Goals	Modified Goals	Completed Interviews
Males 16+	10	6	6
Females 16-17	10	3	3
Females 18+	10	14	12
	30	23	21

Nine of the 21 victim interviews were referred to us through our contacts with stalking and domestic violence organizations. Researchers in CSM worked with the contacts to create a flyer that included basic information about the purpose and logistics of the interview. The flyer specified that we were looking for stalking victims/survivors who experienced stalking within the past 12 months, but that we were open to interviewing victims/survivors who experienced stalking within the past three years. Our contacts with the organizations shared the flyer with their clients and with others in their professional networks who work with similar clientele. When recruiting through that channel was no longer productive, we broadened our reach by posting the flyer on Craigslist. Four of the respondents who screened in as victims were recruited via the Craigslist flyer. We also created a broadcast message that was sent to all US Census Bureau employees who work in the headquarters in Suitland, Maryland asking them to forward the information to anyone they know who might fit the criteria. This resulted in five victim interviews. Both Craigslist ads and Census Bureau broadcast messages are regularly used to recruit respondents for other cognitive interview studies done by CSM.

One of the changes from the 2006 to the 2016 SVS administration is the inclusion of minors. To obtain data on persons under the age of 18, we cognitively tested the survey questions on respondents who were 16 and 17 years of age. Due to difficulties targeting this specific population for recruitment, the three teen victims of stalking were ultimately recruited using the personal networks of CSM employees. Our target was to recruit 10 females ages 16 and 17, and 10 males age 16 and older.

Time constraints on recruitment and the nature of the criteria for inclusion hindered our ability to meet our target goal for some subgroups, specifically female teens and males over 16. We altered our recruitment after interviewing had started in an attempt to interview as many victims as possible. Though we reduced the goals for males and female teens, some individuals in those categories unexpectedly screened in.

To avoid biasing their responses during the interview, we did not explicitly ask if individuals had experienced stalking when scheduling them. Thus, we were not always able to predict who was going to screen in or out of the survey ahead of time. Some individuals who were recruited as victims ended up screening out, and some who were recruited as non-victims screened in to the survey. While we were able to adjust our recruitment to accommodate these changes during Rounds 1-4, time constraints prevented us from modifying recruitment during Round 5. Therefore, our final number of completed interviews do not perfectly match our modified recruitment goals for each category (see Table 1 and Table 2 for recruitment goals for victims and non-victims, respectively).

5.1.1.2 Non-victims

A total of 39 non-victim respondents were selected to participate in the research study. Many of these participants were referred to us through advertisements and personal networks within the Census Bureau. We exceeded our recruitment goals for all categories, including the number of female minors ages 16 and 17, and males age 16 and older. Table 2 shows the original recruitment goals for non-victims broken down by age and sex, the modified goals that were changed due to recruitment difficulties, and the final number of completed interviews for each group.

Some respondents who do self-identify as victims of stalking screened out of the survey as non-victims, meaning they were not asked the main incident questions as a result of their answers to the screener questions. This occurred for two reasons. One reason is that some individuals' concept of what constitutes stalking does not align with the official definition of stalking used to guide the screener questions. So even though they think that they were stalked, the experiences they think of as stalking do not meet the definition of stalking (i.e., being followed by a stranger one time). Another reason is that some respondents had difficulty interpreting and answering one or more of the screener questions and their answers resulted in them screening out when they should have screened in to the survey. These individuals were victims of stalking, but incorrectly screened out (see section 6.3.61 Potential False Negatives for details). These issues helped identify and address problematic questions, and are discussed in depth in Section 6: Cognitive Interview Findings.

Table 2. Recruitment Goals for Non-Victims

	Non-Victims		
	Original Goals	Modified Goals	Completed Interviews
Males 16+	10	12	12
Females 16-17	10	13	13
Females 18+	10	12	14
	30	37	39

5.1.2 Respondent Characteristics

Interviewers conducted cognitive interviews with 60 respondents over five rounds. Protocols were edited between the rounds. Though our goal was to recruit a diverse sample of all races and socioeconomic statuses, the difficult nature of recruiting the target population for this study and the reliance on respondent self-selection resulted in overrepresentation of some characteristics. The majority of respondents were female. As for race, the majority of respondents are white, with the second-most being black. There were four Asian and American Indian respondents, and four respondents reported Hispanic origins. The majority of respondents were in the 16-17 age range, due to the need to test certain questions with potential respondents in that age group.

The teenagers recruited were mainly white, middle class females. Teens were hard to recruit for this project, so they mostly came from the personal networks of the CSM employees, and a partial snowball sample due to asking the teens that had participated to refer their friends.

The victims were largely 18+ years old and female. For race, the majority again was white or black race with one identifying as Asian, and two reporting Hispanic origins. The sample of victims had a disproportionate number of individuals with graduate degrees. While we do not know for sure why this occurred, it could be that stalking victims with higher levels of education are more likely to work closely with advocacy groups, which was a main source of victim recruitment. See Table 3 for a more detailed breakdown.

The non-victims again skewed more toward female, and white or black. However, due to the need to recruit teenagers 16 and 17 years old, education skewed more towards a less than high school degree. See Table 4 for a more detailed breakdown.

Table 3. Respondent Characteristics of Victims

	Victims					
	Round 1	Round 2	Round 3	Round 4	Round 5	Total
N	5	6	1	3	6	21
Gender						
Female	4	2	0	3	6	15
Male	1	4	1	0	0	6
Race						
White	2	4	0	0	4	10
Black	3	2	1	2	0	8
Hispanic	0	0	0	1	1	2
Asian	0	0	0	0	1	1
American Indian	0	0	0	0	0	0
Multiple Races	0	0	0	0	0	0
Education						
Less than High School	0	1	0	0	2	3
High School	0	2	0	1	1	4
Some College	2	0	0	1	0	3
College Graduate	0	0	0	0	0	0
Graduate Education	3	3	1	1	3	11
Age						
16-17	0	1	0	0	2	3
18-25	1	0	1	0	0	2
26-40	1	1	0	1	4	7
41-60	3	4	0	2	0	9
Over 60	0	0	0	0	0	0
Household Income						
Less than \$25,000	2	1	0	0	1	4
\$25,000-\$50,000	1	1	1	0	0	3
\$50,001 to \$100,000	2	1	0	1	1	5
Over \$100,000	0	3	0	2	4	9
Refused	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 4. Respondent Characteristics of Non-Victims

	Non-Victims					
	Round 1	Round 2	Round 3	Round 4	Round 5	Total
N	10	4	9	7	9	39
Gender						
Female	8	2	5	5	7	27
Male	2	2	4	2	2	12
Race						
White	6	2	5	6	5	24
Black	2	2	0	1	4	9
Hispanic	2	0	0	0	0	2
Asian	0	0	3	0	0	3
American Indian	0	0	1	0	0	1
Multiple Races	0	0	0	0	0	0
Education						
Less than High School	3	1	4	5	4	17
High School	0	0	1	0	1	2
Some College	0	1	1	1	2	5
College Graduate	4	1	2	0	1	8
Graduate Education	3	1	1	1	1	7
Age						
16-17	3	1	4	5	4	17
18-25	1	0	0	0	2	3
26-40	2	2	1	0	1	6
41-60	1	1	1	2	1	6
Over 60	1	0	1	0	1	3
Household Income						
Less than \$25,000	2	0	0	0	2	4
\$25,000-\$50,000	1	2	1	0	2	6
\$50,001 to \$100,000	2	2	4	4	2	14
Over \$100,000	5	0	3	3	3	14
Refused	0	0	1	0	0	1

5.1.3 The Cognitive Interview Protocol

The protocols used in this study focused on respondents' reactions to new and revised questions in the National Crime Victimization Survey screener and demographic sections (specifically the newly added series on sexual orientation and gender identity), as well as the NCVS Supplemental Victimization Survey. At the start of the interview, Census Bureau staff told respondents that the purpose of the study was to see how well the NCVS SVS worked. Respondents were also told that information they provided would be confidential and their anonymity would be preserved.

Interviewers then asked respondents to complete the interview as if an interviewer had come to their home. In addition to asking the NCVS and SVS questions, interviewers also asked respondents probing questions that were designed to address specific testing issues for particular questions. The specific type of cognitive interview consisted of both concurrent and quasi-retrospective probing (Willis, 2015). Most probes were concurrent; interviewers asked probing questions as a follow up immediately after the survey question being evaluated. Quasi-retrospective probes were used when asking a probing question immediately after a survey question would disrupt the flow of a set of questions. When retrospective probes were used, interviewers let respondents know they were about to ask some follow up questions about the questions they just answered. Interviewers re-read the question text before asking the probes. After asking all retrospective probes for a given section, interviewers let respondents know that they were returning to the main survey questions.

The interviewers made notes of any response difficulty experienced by respondents, including question incomprehension and the inability to decide on a response. Interviewers also noted questions that were difficult to administer. Difficulty administering questions can stem from multiple factors, including question length and unnatural phrasing.

Finally, interviewers asked respondents a set of debriefing questions at the end of the interview. The debriefing questions allowed respondents to define stalking in their own words. Individuals who reported experiencing unwanted contacts and behaviors were asked if they consider those contacts and behaviors to be stalking. Respondents were also given the opportunity to express their overall impressions of the interview, as well as make any other final comments about the survey.

5.1.4 Interviewer Staffing and Training

All 60 interviews were conducted by a team of nine interviewers from the US Census Bureau's Center for Survey Measurement. Before a new CSM employee begins conducting cognitive interviews on CSM projects, they are thoroughly trained on cognitive interviewing techniques during an intensive two-day training course. All interviewers working on this project had already received this one-time training before being assigned to the team. The training covered the purpose of cognitive interviews, how to design and use a cognitive interviewing protocol, and how to effectively use probes during an interview.

Interviewers were trained on the NCVS SVS protocol prior to the first round of interviews. The team went through the protocol question by question to discuss the purpose of the questions and probes. All interviewers conducted a practice interview to ensure interviewer preparedness before

scheduling their first interview with a respondent. After changes were made to the protocol between each round, the project lead met with interviewers individually to discuss all revisions and confirm that the interviewers were prepared to administer the new version of the protocol.

5.1.5 Interview Consent

All respondents were provided with a consent form prior to beginning the interview. The consent form informs respondents of their rights as a participant in the study. It also provides authorization for interviewers to audiotape the interview. The form explains that the purpose of the audiotape is to have a complete record of all comments, that it will be used to improve the questionnaire, and that only the staff directly involved in the project will have access to the tapes. Respondents who deny the request to record the interview are still permitted to participate in the study. All respondents who participated in the cognitive interviews consented to be audiotaped.

6 COGNITIVE INTERVIEW FINDINGS

In this section, we present the question-by-question findings from the cognitive interviews. Each question is presented with a round-by-round comparison highlighting any changes that occurred from one round to the next. Analyses from the cognitive interviews are then used to explain why those changes were made, and discuss how revised questions performed in the following rounds. Questions that were not problematic and did not require revisions are included in the report for context, but their performance during testing warrants no discussion.

In the following sections, when multiple direct quotes are used to illustrate the findings, respondents are referred to using the following labeling convention:

- Adult respondents who screened into the Supplemental Victimization Survey (and thus categorized as adult victims) are labeled as AV1, AV2, AV3, etc.
- Teen respondents who screened into the Supplemental Victimization Survey (and thus categorized as teen victims) are labeled as TV1, TV2, TV3, etc.
- Adult respondents who screened out of the Supplemental Victimization Survey (and thus categorized as adult non-victims) are labeled as ANV1, ANV2, ANV3, etc.
- Teen respondents who screened out of the Supplemental Victimization Survey (and thus categorized as teen non-victims) are labeled as TNV1, TNV2, TNV3, etc.

6.1 National Crime Victimization Survey: Screener Questions

The questions in this section come from the National Crime Victimization Survey Basic Screen Questionnaire. They were included in the questionnaire used in this study to provide some context in order to test the addition of the sexual orientation and gender identity questions in the demographic section (see Section 6.2.1 and Section 6.2.2 for the discussion of the sexual orientation and gender identity questions). These questions are outside of the scope of this study. For this reason, probing questions were not built into the questionnaire, though interviewers were free to spontaneously probe in response to respondent comments or non-verbal cues. Again, since these questions were outside the scope of the study, no changes were made to the question wording. In this section, we present findings on the NCVS basic screen questions.

NCVS Screener Question 1

Original Question Q1: Round 1 – Round 5 and Final Recommendation (no changes made)

Q1. I'm going to read some examples that will give you an idea of the kinds of crimes this study covers. As I go through them, tell me if any of these happened to you in the last 6 months, that is since _____, 20 ____.

Was something belonging to YOU stolen, such as –

- (a) Things that you carry, like luggage, a wallet, purse, briefcase book -**
- (b) Clothing, jewelry, or cellphone -**
- (c) Bicycle or sports equipment -**
- (d) Things in your home - like a TV, stereo, or tools –**
- (e) Things from a vehicle, such as a package, groceries, camera, or CDs –**

OR

(f) Did anyone ATTEMPT to steal anything belonging to you?

Did any incidents of this type happen to you?

- Yes
- No

Original Question Q1 Findings:

While all respondents were ultimately able to answer this question, it is difficult for interviewers to administer, and may be difficult for respondents to process as it is read aloud. The length of the question makes it cumbersome to read fluently. Respondents may not process all items listed in the various categories, as they are trying to listen to the question while also thinking about whether or not a given item was stolen. While it is a single question, Q1 contains three distinct questions: “Was something belonging to YOU stolen?” “Did anyone ATTEMPT to steal anything belonging to you?” and “Did any incidents of this type happen to you?”

Respondents are supposed to provide a yes or no answer to the question “Did any incidents of this type happen to you?” after hearing the complete list. However, at the beginning of the question, the text prompts respondents to let the interviewer know if any of the items were stolen *as* the interviewer reads through the list (“As I go through them, tell me if any of these happened to you”).

Respondents frequently interrupted the interviewers as they were reading the question, further complicating the reading of the question. These interruptions occurred both when respondents were reporting that items were stolen and to indicate that items had not been stolen. Some respondents replied “no” after every item. The length of the question frustrated some respondents. One interviewer wrote, “She interrupted me after item (d) to say nothing had been stolen in the past 6 months. She repeated this answer after reading the next two items,” (ANV19).

Due to the difficulties experienced during the interviews, we recommend further cognitive testing of this question to guide recommendations for revisions.

NCVS Screener Question 2

Original Question Q2: Round 1 – Round 5 and Final Recommendation (no changes made)

Q2. (Other than any incidents already mentioned,) since _____, 20 ____, were you attacked or threatened OR did you have something stolen from you –

- (a) At home including the porch or yard -**
 - (b) At or near a friend's, relative's, or neighbor's home -**
 - (c) At work or school -**
 - d) In places such as a storage shed or laundry room, a shopping mall, restaurant, bank, or airport -**
 - (e) While riding in any vehicle -**
 - (f) On the street or in a parking lot -**
 - (g) At such places as a party, theater, gym, picnic area, bowling lanes, or while fishing or hunting -**
- OR**
- (h) Did anyone ATTEMPT to attack or ATTEMPT to steal anything belonging to you from any of these places?**

Did any incidents of this type happen to you?

- Yes
- No

Original Question Q2 Findings:

Findings for question Q2 are similar to those for question Q1. Respondents were able to answer the question, but the length of and phrasing used in the question make it difficult for interviewers to administer and for respondents to process as it is being read. Additionally, the question is asking respondents to think about six different concepts while answering the question, making it cognitively burdensome.

While listening to a long list of locations where incidents may occur (concept 1), respondents must think about whether they were attacked (concept 2), threatened (concept 3), had something stolen (concept 4), experienced an attempted attack (concept 5), or experienced an attempted theft (concept 6).

The fact that respondents were able to provide a yes or no answer does not necessarily mean that they were easily able to process the question, or that their answer is accurate. Difficulty processing this question may result in an underreporting of incidents. For example, if a respondent is only focusing on one type of incident, an attack, as the list of locations is being read, they may respond “no,” when they have experienced a theft in one of the locations listed.

Due to the fact that the question is difficult to administer and creates a cognitive burden for respondents, we recommend further cognitive testing of this question to guide recommendations for revisions.

NCVS Screener Question 3

Original Question Q3: Round 1 – Round 5 and Final Recommendation (no changes made)

Q3. (Other than any incidents already mentioned,) has anyone attacked or threatened you in any of these ways –

(Exclude telephone threats)

- (a) With any weapon, for instance, a gun or knife -**
- (b) With anything like a baseball bat, frying pan, scissors, or stick -**
- (c) By something thrown, such as a rock or bottle -**
- (d) Include any grabbing, punching, or choking,**
- (e) Any rape, attempted rape or other type of sexual attack -**
- (f) Any face to face threats –**

OR

(g) Any attack or threat or use of force by anyone at all? Please mention it even if you are not certain it was a crime.

Did any incidents of this type happen to you?

- Yes**
- No**

Original Question Q3 Findings:

The same issues that exist for questions Q1 and Q2 exist for question Q3. The question is lengthy, difficult to administer, and creates a cognitive burden since respondents must consider multiple distinct concepts when answering the question. In the findings for question Q2, it was mentioned that respondents might focus on one or some of the concepts while neglecting others while answering. The summaries for question Q3 provide evidence of this occurring. Two respondents interrupted the interviewer to say that they have not been threatened; they make no mention of whether or not they were attacked. This suggests that respondents might focus on one type of incident, rather than on all types of incidents the questions are intending to measure.

This question is also problematic in that the list of ways one can attack or threaten the respondent uses inconsistent grammatical phrasing, most specifically with d “include any grabbing, punching, or choking”.

We recommend further cognitive testing of this question to guide recommendations for revisions.

NCVS Screener Question 4

Original Question Q4: Round 1 – Round 5 and Final Recommendation (no changes made)

Q4. People often don't think of incidents committed by someone they know. (Other than any incidents already mentioned,) did you have something stolen from you OR were you attacked or threatened by -

(Exclude telephone threats)

- (a) Someone at work or school -**
- (b) A neighbor or friend -**
- (c) A relative or family member -**
- (d) Any other person you've met or known?**

Did any incidents of this type happen to you?

- Yes**
- No**

Original Question Q4 Findings:

Respondents were able to answer this question without obvious complications. However, this question requires respondents to consider three different types of incidents as they are listening to the list of possible offenders. This has the potential to place a cognitive burden on the respondent. Further cognitive testing should be conducted on this item to suggest and test revisions to reduce cognitive burden on the respondents.

NCVS Screener Question 5

Original Question Q5: Round 1 – Round 5 and Final Recommendation (no changes made)

Q5. Incidents involving forced or unwanted sexual acts are often difficult to talk about. (Other than any incidents already mentioned,) have you been forced or coerced to engage in unwanted sexual activity by –

- (a) Someone you didn't know -**
- (b) A casual acquaintance –**
- OR**
- (c) Someone you know well?**

Did any incidents of this type happen to you?

- Yes**
- No**

Original Question Q5 Findings:

This question did not cause any issues during testing. It was easy for interviewers to administer, and there was no indication that it was difficult for respondents to understand. While this question does not appear to be problematic, it would benefit from cognitive testing in the context of the other screener questions that do require additional cognitive testing.

NCVS Screener Question 6

Original Question Q6: Round 1 – Round 5 and Final Recommendation (no changes made)

Q6. During the last 6 months, (other than any incidents already mentioned,) did you call the police to report something that happened to YOU which you thought was a crime?

- Yes [skip to Q7]
- No [skip to Q8]

Original Question Q6 Findings:

Overall, this question performed well. One respondent said that he thought this was a good question (unprompted), but did not elaborate on why he thought that.

Two respondents did have trouble answering the question, but this trouble seemed to stem from their difficulty categorizing their experience, rather than from the way the question is worded. One respondent asked if he could explain the situation to the interviewer and have the interviewer code “yes” or “no.” The interviewer replied that she could not answer his questions or interpret the situation for him. He ultimately responded “yes.” The second respondent explained her situation, debated out loud, and chose to respond “no.”

Like question Q5, this question is not problematic, but would benefit from cognitive testing if the rest of the series is being cognitively tested.

NCVS Screener Question 7

Original Question Q7: Round 1 – Round 5 and Final Recommendation (no changes made)

Q7. [If Q6= Yes]

Were you attacked or threatened, or was something stolen or an attempt made to steal something that belonged to you or another household member?

- Yes
- No

Original Question Q7 Findings:

Question Q7 is a follow-up question to Q6. It is intended to capture whether the incident referred to in question Q6 was an attack, threat, theft, or attempted theft. As worded, there is nothing in Q7 that indicates that it is a follow-up question referring to the incident reported in Q6. The way Q7 is worded, it may be interpreted as a stand-alone question, which appears to ask about the same information in question Q4. For this reason, it is problematic.

Most respondents were able to easily provide a yes or no response to this question. However, without probing, there is no way to know if they were responding to Q7 as a follow-up to Q6, or as a stand-alone question. The unprompted comments of one respondent indicate that at least some individuals interpret this as a stand-alone question. After hearing the question, the respondent (AV5) said, “Didn’t we already answer that? ... I felt like I already answered that.” She then went on to describe some moments that her stalker had put her through. When answering this question,

she was thinking about various attacks, threats, and thefts she experienced, not just the incidents reported to the police as indicated in Q6.

Though it is not specific to this question, the aforementioned respondent (AV5) mentioned that she had done a survey on this topic conducted by the Montgomery County Family Violence Center. She said the questions in that survey were short and specific, whereas the questions in this questionnaire are long, and that she would still be thinking about the previous question as the next question was being read. These comments support the critique that the screen questions in this section are long and difficult for respondents to process efficiently. It is concerning that a respondent voiced frustration with the questions so early in the questionnaire.

We recommend further cognitive testing of this question to guide recommendations for revisions. The revised version of this question needs to somehow indicate that it is a follow-up question referring to the incident(s) reported in Q6.

NCVS Screener Question 8

Original Question Q8: Round 1 – Round 5 and Final Recommendation (no changes made)

Q8. During the last 6 months, (other than any incidents already mentioned,) did anything which you thought was a crime happen to YOU, but you did NOT report to the police?

- Yes [skip to Q9]
- No [skip to Q10]

Original Question Q8 Findings:

Overall, this question performed well. There were no apparent problems in administering or answering this question.

Like other questions in this section, this question is not problematic, but would benefit from cognitive testing if the rest of the series is being cognitively tested.

NCVS Screener Question 9

Original Question Q9: Round 1 – Round 5 and Final Recommendation (no changes made)

Q9. [If Q8 = Yes]

Were you attacked or threatened, or was something stolen or an attempt made to steal something that belonged to you or another household member?

- Yes
- No

Original Question Q9 Findings:

Question Q9 is a follow-up question to Q8. It is intended to capture whether the incident referred to in question Q6 was an attack, threat, theft, or attempted theft. As worded, there is nothing in Q9 that indicates that it is a follow-up question referring to the incident reported in Q8. The way Q9 is worded, it may be interpreted as a stand-alone question. For this reason, it is problematic.

Twenty-one respondents answered this question. As with Q7, the ability to easily provide a yes or no answer does not confirm that the respondents correctly interpreted this question as a follow-up to Q8. Two respondents provided responses beyond a simple “yes” or “no” that indicates that they did not interpret this as a follow-up question.

When answering Q8, one respondent (ANV18) provided unprompted details on the incident he was thinking of when answering yes, saying that something was stolen from his car. When answering the follow-up question Q9, the same respondent said yes, that he had lost packages, but that he didn’t know if they were stolen or lost by the delivery people. These remarks indicate that the respondent did not interpret Q9 as a follow-up, but instead as a separate question asking if he has been attacked, threatened, or the victim of theft.

The second respondent, AV5, had a similar reaction to Q9 as she did to Q7. She responded, “Didn’t I just answer that? ... I feel like I’ve been asked the exact same question five times now.” The respondent said she would ask smaller questions. She then asked if the questions were different or not. The interviewer told her that Q9 is referring to the incident she was thinking of when she said “yes” to Q8. The respondent then said that she hadn’t realized the two questions (Q8 and Q9) were related.

The respondents comment that she feels like she just answered the same question five times is important. Many of these screener questions ask about the same types of incidents occurring under slightly different circumstances. The purpose of each question is not always immediately clear. When the questions are being read aloud to the respondent, and are cognitively burdensome, it becomes even more difficult for them to discern what exactly the question is asking. If respondents are not able to easily determine what the question is asking, their interpretation of the question might be incorrect, negatively affecting data quality.

We recommend further cognitive testing of this question to guide recommendations for revisions. The revised version of this question needs to somehow indicate that it is a follow-up question referring to the incident(s) reported in Q8.

6.2 National Crime Victimization Survey: Demographic Questions

LGBTQ individuals experience many crimes at a disproportionately high rate. Data from the NCVS informs critical reports, which have the ability to influence public policy, and government funding for crime prevention and intervention services and research. Including the respondents’ sexual orientation and gender identity with other demographic characteristics provides more accurate and detailed data that can be used to inform public policy debates and funding decisions regarding this vulnerable population. BJS has decided to include sexual orientation and gender identity questions in the 2016 NCVS.

The sexual orientation questions that are being added to the NCVS come from the National Health Interview Survey (NHIS), conducted by the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS). The questions had been previously tested using cognitive interviews and have performed well with people that were 18 years or older. Since these questions will be administered to people 16 years or older, these questions needed to be cognitively tested with 16 and 17 year olds. The NCVS main

screening questions and subsets of the demographic questions were included in the protocol to assess whether any context effects occur.

The gender identity questions come from the California Health Interview Survey (CHIS). The second gender identity question was modified for inclusion in the NCVS as the result of feedback from transgendered individuals, so it had not yet been cognitively tested. NCVS wants to ask these items of respondents 16 years or older, so the modified versions needed to be cognitively tested. NCVS is curious about the use of sex labels (male/female) versus gender labels (man/woman), and about how to correctly record people that identify as transgendered.

6.2.1 Sexual Orientation Questions

The 16 and 17-year-old respondents were all able to understand and easily answer the sexual orientation questions. There were no significant differences between the responses to the questions and probes given by adults and teens.

NCVS Demographic Question Q24a – asked only of males

Original Question Q24a: Round 1 – Round 5 and Final Recommendation (no changes made)

Q24a. Which of the following best represents how you think of yourself?

- Gay
- Straight, that is, not gay
- Bisexual
- Something else
- I don't know the answer
- Refused

Original Question Q24a Findings:

Eighteen respondents heard this question. All respondents were able to easily answer this item.

We have no revision suggestions for this question. However, further cognitive testing may be needed because only one respondent identified as something other than straight (he identified as gay).

NCVS Demographic Question Q24b – asked only of females

Original Question Q24b: Round 1 – Round 5 and Final Recommendation (no changes made)

Q24b. Which of the following best represents how you think of yourself?

- Lesbian or gay
- Straight, that is, not lesbian or gay
- Bisexual
- Something else
- I don't know the answer
- Refused

Original Question Q24b Findings:

Forty-two respondents heard this question and most were able to understand it. One respondent (ANV14) had problems with this question. She initially said “Married,” and had to be probed to answer ‘straight,’ but the interviewer said she was hesitant to pick that option. This respondent was a naturalized citizen, so there may have been a language barrier in place. This respondent reported being married to a man.

Two respondents expressed preference for the term ‘heterosexual’ over the term ‘straight.’ One of them (ANV3) first said ‘something else,’ then quickly said heterosexual. The other one (AV14) answered ‘straight’ but said she preferred heterosexual, but figured it was okay not to use here because homosexual isn’t used either. A third respondent (TNV12) answered ‘straight’ and wondered why the answer choice didn’t just read ‘straight.’

We have no revision suggestions for this question. However, further cognitive testing may be needed because only 5 respondents identified with an orientation other than straight.

NCVS Demographic Question Q25 – asked only if Q24a or Q24b was “something else”

Original Question Q25: Round 1 – Round 5

Q25. What do you mean by something else?

- You are not straight, but identify with another label such as queer, trisexual, omnisexual or pansexual
- You are transgender, transsexual or gender variant
- You have not figured out or are in the process of figuring out your sexuality
- You do not think of yourself as having sexuality
- You do not use labels to identify yourself
- You mean something else
- Refused
- Don't know

Question Q25 Revision 1: Final Recommendation:

We recommend removing question Q25.

Original Question Q25 Findings:

Only two respondents were asked this question. Respondent ANV3, mentioned in the Q24 findings, answered ‘heterosexual,’ which is another term for ‘straight.’ The other considered sexuality to be fluid, which does not exactly line up with the answer choices in Q25, but could be considered ‘you do not use labels to identify yourself.’

After testing, we suggest dropping this follow up question. The National Center for Health Statistics has done testing on similar questions before ultimately deciding to drop them. Few respondents receive this follow-up question, as seen in our testing with only two of 60 respondents hearing this question. Most responses to this question are derivations of categories that are already offered in the preceding question, a finding supported in our testing where one of the two respondents giving an answer that would fit into the response options of Q24.

NCVS Demographic Question Q26

Original Question Q26: Round 1 – Round 5

Q26. What do you mean by don't know?

- You don't understand the words
- You understand the words, but you have not figured out or are in the process of figuring out your sexuality
- You mean something else
- Refused
- Don't know

Question Q26 Revision 1: Final Recommendation:

We recommend removing question Q26.

Original Question Q26 Findings:

None of the respondents heard this question in testing since this question is only asked when a 'don't know' response is given in question Q24a/b.

After testing, we suggest dropping this follow up question. NCHS has done testing on similar questions before ultimately deciding to drop them. This type of question is infrequently asked, as seen in our testing with no respondents hearing this question.

6.2.2 Gender Identity Questions

The teenage respondents in this sample were all able to understand and easily answer the gender identity questions. There were no significant differences between the responses to the questions and probes given by adults and teens.

NCVS Demographic Question Q27

Original Question Q27: Round 1 – Round 5 and Final Recommendation (no changes made)

Q27. On your original birth certificate, was your sex assigned as male or female?

- Male
- Female
- Refused
- Don't know

Original Question Q27 Findings:

Respondents were able to easily answer this item.

The CHIS has used two versions of question Q27 in the past. The original wording was “What sex were you assigned at birth, on your original birth certificate?” The CHIS is currently using the revised wording of the question that we used in question Q27. There has not been separate cognitive testing or experimental field tests for either of these two versions. We used the wording shown in question Q27, but included the original version of the question along with probing questions after Q27 to test how easily respondents can understand and answer the question,

whether the alternative version resulted in a different answer, and to elicit respondent feedback on both versions of the question.

When asked “What sex were you assigned at birth, on your original birth certificate?” almost all respondents either said the same answer (male or female) or just said they would answer ‘the same way.’ Two respondents (AV13 and TNV13) said they would answer “woman,” and one respondent (ANV14) said she would answer ‘girl.’

Thirty-five respondents preferred the original modified item. Seventeen preferred the item in the structured probe. Five had no preference.

Many respondents that preferred the first version of the question (rather than the alternate version asked during probing) said that it was clearer, more grammatically correct, or more direct than the alternate probed version. Some said that this version focused on the birth certificate:

ANV13: “The first way. Because it kind of takes emotion out of it I guess? Because it takes the legal document, focusing on that.”

TNV4: “I prefer the first one. I just feel like it’s easier to comprehend. Probably because like you sort of assign... you mention birth certificate first.”

Others liked that it was close-ended:

TNV9: “Probably the way it was stated the first time. Well, the first one it gives you male or female so then there’s no confusion as to like what the answer could have been.”

Respondents that liked the structured probe version liked that it was open-ended. Some respondents thought this version would be more sensitive to transgendered persons:

ANV12: “I like the second one better. It just sounds more like sensitive to how people would identify. I have a lot of friends who would use that terminology versus the other one I guess.”

ANV10: “I think the first is slightly more clear, but if I was trans I might be more comfortable with the open ended.”

However, some respondents felt like this version may cause transgendered people to answer incorrectly:

ANV12: “I like the second one. It was easier to understand. I feel like if I was transgender, the first one would have been better. The second one, since I’m not transgender, I feel like it’s more to the point. But if I was, I would have felt like there was a wrong answer with the second one. I don’t know why.”

Respondents that preferred the structured probe version said that it was the wording they heard most often:

ANV6: “I think I like the second one. I’m not really sure, I guess maybe it seems more comprehensive somehow. The first one just feels more clinical and it’s shorter and I hear it less often. What I usually here is “what sex were you assigned at birth.” And so I guess that feels like it’s a little more like what I’m used to hearing.”

ANV19: She preferred the second one, she said, “it’s the one you usually hear, I was surprised the way you phrased the first question.” She said she does a lot of online research and research studies, so hearing the first question caused her to pause and comment on how weird it was (She had said, “It’s so funny how they have to change these questions.”)

Fifty-one respondents said that both versions were understood equally well. Some respondents said that one version was better for them, but both are understood:

TNV5: When asked about her preference, she said the first one is more detailed, she would understand the first one more. She said both are understood well.

TNV13: “Yeah, the first one just processes better, I guess.”

Some respondents said that one wording might be clearer for one group of people, and the other version clearer for a different group.

AV8: He said that both were understood equally well. “The versions are different for sure, and for somebody who does not describe themselves as a man or woman they may prefer one over another”. [This seems to be a common theme where respondents are hesitant to say what transgender people prefer and they say so].

Because the majority of the respondents preferred the original item, and no respondents had problems with answering it, we have no revision suggestion for this question.

NCVS Demographic Question Q28a

Original Question Q28a: Round 1 – Round 5 and Final Recommendation (no changes made)

Q28a. Do you currently describe yourself as a man, woman, or transgender person?

- Man
- Woman
- Transgender person
- None of these

Original Question Q28a Findings:

The CHIS uses the following wording in the second question of the two-part gender identity questions, “Do you currently describe yourself as male, female, or transgender?” Previous research has shown that transgender and other minority gender individuals prefer using gender labels (man/woman) over sex labels (male/female). For this reason, we used a modified version of the CHIS question in the questionnaire (“Do you currently describe yourself as a man, woman, or transgender person?”).

We also placed a scripted probe into the protocol, asking the respondents the original version of the question currently used by CHIS to test the use of gender versus sex labels. After reading respondents the alternate version of this question, “Do you currently describe yourself as male, female, or transgender?” we asked them how they would answer this item, which item they prefer, and if they believed both items were understood equally. Fifty-five respondents were asked some or all of the scripted probes for this question.

Respondents were able to easily answer question Q28a and the follow-up probes.

All respondents answered in a way that follows the sex/gender dichotomy (e.g. if they had said man earlier, they said male to answer the alternate version), or they said ‘they would answer it the same way.’

Eleven respondents preferred the item as asked; 28 respondents preferred the alternate version asked during probing; 16 respondents had no preference.

The majority of respondents preferred to use sex labels over gender labels:

TNV10: “The second one. It’s easier to understand... I guess I’m just more familiar with being identified as male or female rather than man or woman.”

TNV13: “The second one. I just use the word female more often than I use woman. I guess it’s... not more familiar but... I would say I was a female before I’d say I was a woman, I guess.”

There was disagreement on what would work for all ages. Several adults pointed out that younger respondents might not consider themselves to be men and women. This idea was supported by teens’ comments on the terms.

ANV14: The respondent preferred male/female and said it was easier to understand because if you talk to a younger person they may not consider themselves a man/woman.

AV14: She also mentioned that age was a factor in this question and that the term female “covered everything” including girls.

ANV22: She prefers female because she could be a girl [child].

ANV7: He preferred [the first version] because male/female/transgender could be a “little boy” or “infant” and they have not yet developed their real gender. “When you say man there is no question that it is an adult person.”

TV1: “Probably male or female. I feel like man or woman seems adult like and male or female is just strictly gender.”

TNV3: He said he prefers the second version, that ‘male and female’ have a wider audience.

TNV15: The respondent prefers the second because he is a minor so he isn’t a man yet, ‘male’ describes a child better.

While we did not have a respondent that identified as transgendered, or mentioned transitioning, a few respondents commented about how transgender individual might use different terms to describe their gender identify:

ANV10: “The same, but I think a trans person would just say they are a man or woman. I know some people that say neither or both.”

AV3: The respondent believes first is more about gender, and the second one about sex. "It seems like someone's sex and gender might not match up if they are transitioning."

AV12: “Even if they are transgender they either identify with male or female.”

There were other comments on the sensitivity of this question to all potential respondents:

TNV16: “I like the second question better because when it says transgender person, it just sounds kinda derogatory. It sounds kinda rude.”

ANV19: She said it really depends on what a transgendered person would want, because both would work for her. She said she leaned toward the second one, “In general, when you do a research study, they usually ask ‘male/female,’” but that whatever most transgendered people would agree on, she would be fine with.

TV3: “I don’t think either of them really fit because there’s more than three genders. There’s a whole spectrum. I think the question would be better asked, ‘What do you identify as your gender? If any.’”

Seven respondents simply said that they had not preference. Seven respondents commented that the questions were ‘the same’ or ‘similar:’

TNV4: “Either one, I mean they’re kind of the same question. To me, at least.”

TV2: “They’re both the same to me.”

Two respondents (ANV13 and TV3) didn’t like either question, and suggested new wording to be more inclusive to people would wouldn’t identify as man/woman/transgendered person.

TV3: “I don’t think either of them really fit because there’s more than three genders. There’s a whole spectrum. I think the question would be better asked, ‘What do you identify as your gender? If any.’”

ANV13: “I would... I don’t know, maybe I would say... I guess you might not be able to do this for the survey, but I would have it more open ended for people who might be gender nonconforming. I don’t know if it would just be an “other” option... Could you do it, ‘Do you describe yourself as a man, woman, transgender person, or other?’ There’s so much more that can go into that rather than just breaking it down to those things.”

The majority of respondents said that both questions were understood equally well.

There were no issues with answering question Q28a, so we have no revision suggestion for this question. However, further cognitive testing may be needed because the majority of respondents did not identify as a transgender person.

NCVS Demographic Question Q28b

Original Question Q28b: Round 1 – Round 5 and Final Recommendation (no changes made)

- Q28b. What is your current gender identity?**
- Specify _____
 - Refused
 - Don't know

Original Question Q28b Findings:

No respondents were asked this question, so we have no revision suggestion for this question. However, further cognitive testing may be needed because none of respondents identified as a transgender person.

NCVS Demographic Question Q28c

Original Question Q28c: Round 1

- Q28c. Just to confirm, you were assigned {INSERT RESPONSE FROM Q27} at birth and now describe yourself as a {Q28a or Q28b}. Is that correct?**
- Yes
 - No
 - Refused
 - Don't know

Question Q28c Revision 1: Round 2 – Round 5 and Final Recommendation

- Q28c. Just to confirm, you were assigned {INSERT RESPONSE FROM Q27} at birth and now describe yourself as a {Q28a ~~or~~ Q28b}. Is that correct?**
- Yes
 - No
 - Refused
 - Don't know

Original Question Q28c Findings:

No respondents were asked this item. However, since Q28b directly asks what a respondent's current gender identity is there is no need to ask Q28c. The question Q28b fill option was removed, since individuals answering question Q28b should not be asked question Q28c.

Question Q28c Revision 1 Findings:

No respondents were asked this item, so we have no further revisions to suggest. However, further cognitive testing may be needed because none of the respondents answered Q27 and Q28a differently (man/woman answers at Q27 led to male/female answers at Q28a, respectively).

6.2.3 Additional Demographic Questions

This section discusses findings from additional demographic questions that were included in the testing.. These questions were beyond the scope of the study and only included in the questionnaire for context, so they were not probed on or revised. Nonetheless, the cognitive interviews resulted in some findings worth discussing. There were other demographic questions included in the questionnaire for context that did not result in any findings, and thus are not included in this report.

NCVS Demographic Question Q13

Original Question Q13: Round 1 – Round 5 and Final Recommendation (no changes made)

Q13. Ask or verify -

Which of the following best describes your job? Were you employed in the ...

- **Medical Profession?**
- **Mental Health Services Field?**
- **Teaching Profession?**
- **Law Enforcement or Security Field?**
- **Retail Sales?**
- **Transportation Field?**
- **Something else? _____**

Original Question Q13 Findings:

Respondents had no issues in answering this question, however, across all rounds, the majority of respondents could not fit their job into the categories provide, and had to wait for the ‘something else’ option to report it. One respondent picked two of the fields instead of just one. One respondent chose a specific field, but the interviewer was concerned that the choice was not exactly a good one. One respondent asked for clarification if her job would fit into a specified field, before ultimately picking ‘something else.’ One respondent asked why the specific fields were chosen as answers, and said, “I feel like it’s very specific.”

All respondents were able to answer the question, despite the majority choosing ‘something else,’ so we have no revision suggestion for this question.

NCVS Demographic Question Q14

Original Question Q14: Round 1 – Round 5 and Final Recommendation (no changes made)

Q14. Ask or verify -

Is your job with –

- **A private company, business, or individual for wages?**
- **The Federal government?**
- **A State, county, or local government?**
- **Yourself (Self-employed) in your own**
- **Business, professional practice, or farm?**

Original Question Q14 Findings:

Most respondents were able to select an answer. Some respondents only said ‘yes.’ Some respondents worked for non-profit organizations and were unsure if their job would fit into any of these categories. One respondent said she does volunteer work, and she was also unable to tell if her job would fit into any of these categories. One respondent chose multiple options.

One respondent felt like this question should be asked “more openly first, then narrow down.” Another said that the first option and the last option were similar. We have no specific suggestions for revisions for this question. It may be useful to look at how other surveys such as the American Community Survey ask this question.

NCVS Demographic Question Q17

Original Question Q17: Round 1 – Round 5 and Final Recommendation (no changes made)

Q17. Have you ever served on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces, Reserves, or National Guard? [Mark one box.]

- Never served in the military
- Only on active duty for training in the Reserves or National Guard
- Now on active duty
- On active duty in the past, but not now

Original Question Q17 Findings:

Most respondents were able to easily answer this item. Two respondents required probing to determine which branch and whether they were currently active duty, but otherwise understood the question fine. We have no revision suggestion for this question.

NCVS Demographic Question Q19

Original Question Q19: Round 1 – Round 5 and Final Recommendation (no changes made)

Q19. Are you a citizen of the United States? That is, were you born in the United States, born in a U.S. territory, born of U.S. citizen parent(s), or did you become a citizen of the U.S. through naturalization?

- Yes, born in the United States
- Yes, born in Puerto Rico, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, or Northern Marianas
- Yes, born abroad of U.S. citizen parent or parents
- Yes, U.S. citizen by naturalization
- No, not a U.S. citizen

Original Question Q19 Findings:

Some respondents had a hard time with this question. A few answered ‘yes’ to the first sentence of the question, and thought that the next sentence was a separate question. Many respondents said ‘yes’ when they heard both ‘born in the United States,’ and ‘born of U.S. citizen parent(s).’ A few individuals reported being confused or thinking this question was actually multiple questions. One respondent just said ‘yes’ and had to be probed to get to an answer.

All respondents understood the intent of the question, even though some were confused while answering, so we have no specific revision suggestion for this question. As with question Q14, it may be useful to look at the version of this question used in the American Community Survey.

6.3 *NCVS Supplemental Victimization Survey: Screener Questions*

6.3.1 Unwanted Contacts and Behaviors

NCVS SVS Screener Question SQ1

Original Question SQ1: Round 1

Now, I would like to ask you some questions about times when you may have experienced unwanted contacts or behaviors. I want to remind you that the information you provide is confidential. When answering, please think about anyone who may have done these things, including current or former spouses or partners, other people you may know, or strangers. However, please **DO NOT** include bill collectors, solicitors, or other sales people.

SQ1. In the past 12 months, have you experienced any unwanted contacts or behaviors?

By that I mean has anyone –

- a. Followed you around and watched you? YES NO
- b. Sneaked into your home or car and did unwanted things to let you know they had been there? YES NO
- c. Waited for you at your home, work, school, or any place else when you didn't want them to? YES NO
- d. Showed up, rode or drove by places where you were when they had no business being there? YES NO
- e. Left or sent unwanted items, cards, letters, presents, flowers, or any other unwanted items? YES NO
- f. Harassed or repeatedly asked your friends or family for information about you or your whereabouts? YES NO

Now I want to ask about unwanted contacts or behaviors using various technologies, such as your phone, the Internet, or social media apps. In the past 12 months, has anyone –

- g. Made unwanted phone calls to you, left voice messages, sent text messages, or used the phone excessively to contact you? YES NO
- h. Spied on you or monitored your activities using technologies such as a listening device, camera, or computer or cell phone monitoring software or "spyware?" YES NO
- i. Tracked your whereabouts with an electronic tracking device or application, such as GPS or an application on your cell phone? YES NO
- j. Posted or threatened to post inappropriate, unwanted, or personal information about you on the Internet, this includes private photographs, YES NO

videos, or spreading rumors?

- k. Sent unwanted e-mails or messages using the Internet, for example, using social media apps or websites like Instagram, Twitter, or Facebook? YES NO

Question SQ1 Revision 1: Round 2 – Round 4

Now, I would like to ask you some questions about times when you may have experienced unwanted contacts or behaviors. I want to remind you that the information you provide is confidential. When answering, please think about anyone who may have done these things, including current or former spouses or partners, other people you may know, or strangers. However, please DO NOT include bill collectors, solicitors, or other sales people.

SQ1. In the past 12 months, have you experienced any unwanted contacts or behaviors?

By that I mean has anyone –

- a. Followed you around and watched you? YES NO
- b. Sneaked into your home or car and did unwanted things to let you know they had been there? YES NO
- c. Waited for you at your home, work, school, or any place else when you didn't want them to? YES NO
- d. Showed up, rode or drove by places where you were when they had no business being there? YES NO
- e. Left or sent unwanted items, cards, letters, presents, flowers, or any other unwanted items? YES NO
- f. Harassed or repeatedly asked your friends or family for information about you or your whereabouts? YES NO

Now I want to ask about unwanted contacts or behaviors using various technologies, such as your phone, the Internet, or social media apps. In the past 12 months, has anyone –

- g. Made unwanted phone calls to you, left voice messages, sent text messages, or used the phone excessively to contact you? YES NO
- h. Spied on you or monitored your activities using technologies such as a listening device, camera, or computer or cell phone monitoring software?
~~or "spyware?"~~ YES NO
- i. Tracked your whereabouts with an electronic tracking device or application, such as GPS or an application on your cell phone? YES NO
- j. Posted or threatened to post inappropriate, unwanted, or personal information about you on the Internet, this includes private photographs, videos, or spreading rumors? YES NO
- k. Sent unwanted e-mails or messages using the Internet,

for example, using social media apps or websites like Instagram, Twitter, or Facebook? YES NO

Question SQ1 Revision 2: Round 5

Now, I would like to ask you some questions about times when you may have experienced unwanted contacts or behaviors. I want to remind you that the information you provide is confidential. When answering, please think about anyone who may have done these things, including current or former spouses or partners, other people you may know, or strangers. However, please DO NOT include bill collectors, solicitors, or other sales people.

SQ1. In the past 12 months, have you experienced any unwanted contacts or behaviors?
By that I mean has anyone –

- a. Followed you around and watched you? YES NO
- b. [Has anyone] Sneaked into your home, car, or any place else and did unwanted things to let you know they had been there? YES NO
- c. [Has anyone] Waited for you at your home, work, school, or any place else when you didn't want them to? YES NO

Still thinking about unwanted contacts and behaviors, in the past 12 months, has anyone...

- d. Showed up, rode or drove by places where you were when they had no business being there? YES NO
- e. [Has anyone] Left or sent unwanted items, cards, letters, presents, flowers, or any other unwanted items? YES NO
- f. [Has anyone] Harassed or repeatedly asked your friends or family for information about you or your whereabouts? YES NO

Now I want to ask about unwanted contacts or behaviors using various technologies, such as your phone, the Internet, or social media apps. In the past 12 months, has anyone –

- g. Made unwanted phone calls to you, left voice messages, sent text messages, or used the phone excessively to contact you? YES NO
- h. [Has anyone] Spied on you or monitored your activities using technologies such as a listening device, camera, or computer or cell phone monitoring software? YES NO

Still thinking about unwanted contacts and behaviors, in the past 12 months, has anyone...

- i. Tracked your whereabouts with an electronic tracking device or application, such as GPS or an application on your cell phone? YES NO
- j. [Has anyone] Posted or threatened to post inappropriate, unwanted, or personal information about you on the Internet, this includes private photographs, videos, or spreading rumors? YES NO
- k. [Has anyone] Sent unwanted e-mails or messages using

the Internet, for example, using social media apps or websites like Instagram, Twitter, or Facebook? YES NO

1. [Has anyone] **Monitored your activities using social media apps like Instagram, Twitter, or Facebook?** YES NO

Question SQ1 Revision 3: Final Recommendation

Now, I would like to ask you some questions about times when you may have experienced unwanted contacts or behaviors. I want to remind you that the information you provide is confidential. When answering, please think about anyone who may have done these things, including current or former spouses or partners, other people you may know, or strangers. However, please **DO NOT** include bill collectors, solicitors, or other sales people.

SQ1. In the past 12 months, have you experienced any unwanted contacts or behaviors? By that I mean has anyone –

- a. Followed you around and watched you? YES NO
- b. [Has anyone] Sneaked into your home, car, or any place else and did unwanted things to let you know they had been there? YES NO
- c. [Has anyone] Waited for you at your home, work, school, or any place else when you didn't want them to? YES NO

Still thinking about unwanted contacts and behaviors, in the past 12 months, has anyone...

- d. Showed up, rode or drove by places where you were when they had no business being there? YES NO
- e. [Has anyone] Left or sent unwanted items, cards, letters, presents, flowers, or any other unwanted items? YES NO
- f. [Has anyone] Harassed or repeatedly asked your friends or family for information about you or your whereabouts? YES NO

Now I want to ask about unwanted contacts or behaviors using various technologies, such as your phone, the Internet, or social media apps. **Again, please DO NOT include bill collectors, solicitors, or other sales people.** In the past 12 months, has anyone –

- g. Made unwanted phone calls to you, left voice messages, sent text messages, or used the phone excessively to contact you? YES NO
- h. [Has anyone] Spied on you or monitored your activities using technologies such as a listening device, camera, or computer or cell phone monitoring software? YES NO

Still thinking about unwanted contacts and behaviors, in the past 12 months, has anyone...

- i. Tracked your whereabouts with an electronic tracking device or application, such as GPS or an application on your cell phone? YES NO

j.	[Has anyone] Posted or threatened to post inappropriate, unwanted, or personal information about you on the Internet, this includes private photographs, videos, or spreading rumors?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
k.	[Has anyone] Sent unwanted e-mails or messages using the Internet, for example, using social media apps or websites like Instagram, Twitter, or Facebook?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
l.	[Has anyone] Monitored your activities using social media apps like Instagram, Twitter, or Facebook?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO

All 60 respondents answered SQ1. The protocol included quasi-retrospective probes to ask respondents to provide more details about the contacts and behaviors they experienced, to define certain phrases in their own words, and to give examples of behaviors that they think would fit in the various categories. Respondents were also asked if there are any types of contacts or behaviors that should be included in an existing category in SQ1. To avoid disrupting the flow of the questions, interviewers asked SQ1 items A through F, then told respondents that they were going to ask questions about some of the items they just answered. After asking the first set of probes, interviewers told respondents they were returning to the survey questions, asked items G through K, and then told respondents they were about to ask another set of questions about the previous items.

Original Question SQ1 Findings:

Findings for Non-Victims:

Overall, non-victim respondents were able to easily answer question SQ1. Of the 10 non-victims who answered this question in Round 1, seven answered “no” to all items, two answered “yes” to item A about being followed or watched, and one answered “yes” to items A, B, C, and G.

SQ1b. “Sneaked into your home or car and did unwanted things to let you know they had been there?”

During probing for item B, respondents were asked to give an example of an “unwanted thing” someone could do to let them know they had been in their home, car, or any place else. The examples provided indicate that respondents understood the intent of item B. Respondents gave examples of leaving items, taking items, moving things around, or destroying things. For example, one respondent (ANV12) said, “Like leaving notes or taking things that are identifiable as something [the offender] would take or something that’s important to you.” Another woman (ANV4) said that an “unwanted thing” would be “leaving a window open or ransacking the place.”

A second probe for item B asks participants to tell interviewers some places other than your home or car where someone could do unwanted things to let them know they had been there. Responses included at work, at school, or any place you go regularly. For example, one adult respondent said, “I would say work and school, or if you go to a normal coffee shop or gym, places that you go to on a regular basis that they could leave things at.”

Both teen respondents included school as a place someone could do unwanted things. Both mentioned a classroom where they go everyday, like homeroom. One teen mentioned that someone could leave or do something by their locker. The sponsors were particularly interested in whether or not items needed to be modified to include examples specific to teens, such as adding the word “locker”. The responses to this probe suggest that teens do think of their school and locker in the context of this question. No changes were made to this item after Round 1; we decided collect more data on this item before deciding how to change the wording.

SQ1c. “Waited for you at your home, work, school, or any place else when you didn’t want them to?”

For item C, respondents were asked if there are places other than home, work or school where someone could wait for them. A few respondents replied “no” or “no other places.” Individuals who listed other places mentioned the gym, places you go regularly like a favorite coffee shop, and the houses of friends or significant others. Multiple respondents mentioned places relating to a commute, such as a bus stop, a metro stop, or any place along your regular route. One adult (ANV13) said, “Not too many other places that I would be consistently at. I guess maybe the same route that you take to work everyday, someone could be waiting or follow that pattern.” There was no indication that item C was difficult to understand or phrased in a way that led respondents to exclude certain locations.

SQ1d. “Showed up, rode or drove by places where you were when they had no business being there?”

The probe for item D asks respondents what the phrase “no business being there” means to them in the question. All respondents, including teens, were able to provide a fitting definition of the phrase, and to give an appropriate example of a situation like that, indicating that they understand what the phrase means in the context of this question. One adult (ANV13) explained the phrase, “That they didn’t have any affiliation to the place or any of the people in it. And that it’s clearly the sole purpose of them being there to make you uncomfortable or to show their presence to you.” A teen (TNV2) replied, “It would mean they were basically showing up to a place you would never expect them to be. Like a private place they don’t have a membership to. Like somebody passing by Gold’s Gym if I was working out there and they don’t go to that gym.”

SQ1e. “Left or sent unwanted items, cards, letters, presents, flowers, or any other unwanted items?”

For item E, respondents were asked to give an example of another unwanted item that would fit in the category. Respondents had a hard time coming up with additional items, often giving an example that was already listed. Their comments indicate that they understand the types of items the question is asking about, but that the list covers the most common types of items.

TNV1: “Did you say presents? I can’t think of anything else.”

ANV10: “Other than the things you just mentioned. I don’t know other stuff.”

SQ1g. “Made unwanted phone calls to you, left voice messages, sent text messages, or used the phone excessively to contact you?”

The first probe on item G asks respondents what the word “excessively” means to them in this question. Some respondents tried to provide a frequency for what constitutes being excessively contacted via phone.

ANV3: “More than three times.”

TNV1: “Like maybe daily or more than daily.”

Most respondents said some variation of the idea that it becomes excessive when it is unwanted and continues to happen. For example, someone (ANV4) responded, “When the recipient has made it known to the person that these kinds of contacts are unwanted. Any contact beyond that notice would be excessive.”

The second probe on item G asks, “What does an unwanted phone call mean to you?” Eight of the ten non-victims in Round 1 defined “unwanted phone calls” as calls from someone you didn’t want to talk to, whether or not you told the other person you didn’t want to talk to them. As one respondent (ANV13) put it, an unwanted phone call can be “Anything that you don’t want to be a part of. It can be something that makes you feel uncomfortable, or just that you don’t feel like you have a choice in or a sense of autonomy.” One respondent (TNV2) did include wrong numbers that continued to call after informing them that it is the wrong number, and another respondent (ANV3) tried to include telemarketers, but ultimately defined it as a call from “Someone I don’t know or someone I have not asked to call me.” Since the probe only asked what an unwanted phone call meant to them, the last two responses do not necessarily indicate that they would include wrong numbers and telemarketers when answering item G. Therefore, the probe was changed to “What does an unwanted phone call mean to you in this question?” to provide clarification.

SQ1h. Spied on you or monitored your activities using technologies such as a listening device, camera, or computer or cell phone monitoring software or “spyware?”

The probe for item H asked respondents to give an example of spyware. Five of the ten participants explicitly said that they do not know an example of spyware, though some of them tried to guess.

ANV12: “No... [laughs]. Maybe put a virus on your computer? I don’t know if that’s a thing. I’m not super technology savvy though.”

ANV13: “I don’t actually know. I’m not sure what a type of spyware is.”

Two individuals were able to provide appropriate examples (“Software to spy on keystrokes.”) The remaining three individuals responded with broad examples that indicate that they do not know what spyware is.

ANV1: “Webcams, anything that can track your whereabouts.”

TNV1: “Like when people hack your phone.”

Since many respondents did not know what constitutes spyware, the decision was made to remove the term “spyware” from the question. The description of technologies included in item G (“technologies such as a listening device, camera, or computer or cell phone monitoring software”) is easy for respondents to understand, and essentially defines spyware. The modified wording provides enough context for respondents to include incidents involving spyware even if the word “spyware” is not used.

SQ1I. Tracked your whereabouts with an electronic tracking device or application, such as GPS or an application on your cell phone?

Probes for item I ask respondents to give an example of an application that can track location, and an example of an electronic tracking device. Not all respondents were able to provide specific

examples, but they knew that such applications existed and what they are used for. Respondents who were able to provide examples named the application Find My Friends, and said that GPS is an electronic tracking device, and said that it can be “a physical device that you can put on someone’s vehicle or something,” (ANV1).

SQ1k. Sent unwanted e-mails or messages using the Internet, for example, using social media apps or websites like Instagram, Twitter, or Facebook?

All respondents understood what was meant by “Social media apps” in item K. Most responded that they were thinking of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat. Some individuals listed social dating apps, like Tinder, Hinge. One respondent (ANV13) provided her definition, “I don’t take it necessarily as it has to be an app or related to your phone, but just any social media platform. It could include a few other kinds as well; it doesn’t have to be Instagram or whatever. Something that first came to mind would be like a dating app.”

Findings for Victims:

Five victims answered SQ1 in Round 1. Four of those respondents answered “yes” to every item in SQ1. The fifth respondent said “yes” to every item except item SQ1f, “Harassed or repeatedly asked your friends or family for information about you or your whereabouts?” Overall, victim respondents were able to easily answer question SQ1.

SQ1b. “Sneaked into your home or car and did unwanted things to let you know they had been there?”

During probing for item B, respondents were asked to give an example of an “unwanted thing” someone could do to let them know they had been in their home, car, or any place else. The examples provided indicate that respondents understood the intent of item B. Respondents gave the same types of examples that non-victims gave - leaving items, taking items, moving things around, or destroying things. The difference between victims and non-victims is that victims provided examples from their personal experiences. For example, one respondent (AV2) said, “He left items, tampered with possessions or stole them, removed items from the home and brought them back at another date.”

One respondent (AV5) did provide an example that suggests her interpretation of the question extended beyond physical places. This respondent said that online stalking or activity would count. When probed, he told the interviewer that he could tell his LinkedIn profile was visited by the offender and people related to her, and that he knew the same group was looking at his Facebook page and sending him emails.

There were no significant differences between the types of examples non-victims and victims provided, suggesting that most individuals understand the intent of the question, even if they have not experienced unwanted contacts or behaviors.

SQ1c. “Waited for you at your home, work, school, or any place else when you didn’t want them to?”

For item C, respondents were asked if there are places other than home, work or school where someone could wait for them. Respondents included the grocery store, bus stops, and places they frequent such as their favorite bar. Again, responses to this probe show that all respondents understand and interpret the question in a similar way, regardless of victimization status.

SQ1d. “Showed up, rode or drove by places where you were when they had no business being there?”

The probe for item D asks respondents what the phrase “no business being there” means to them in the question. All respondents were able to provide a fitting definition of the phrase, and to give an appropriate example of a situation like that, indicating that they understand what the phrase means in the context of this question. As one respondent explained, “[It means] a place where a person would not ‘regularly’ need to go. They are there because you are there in that circumstance.”

One respondent (AV1) did elaborate on his definition, which may provide deeper insight to how someone who has experienced unwanted contacts and behaviors thinks of the phrase “no business being there.” He said that this includes places, even if they’re public, that the individual asks the offender not to follow them there. He said that “the person engages in this unwanted activity even though [the victim] pleads to not infringe upon personal choices and rights and privacy even if it’s in a public arena.”

SQ1e. “Left or sent unwanted items, cards, letters, presents, flowers, or any other unwanted items?”

For item E, respondents were asked to give an example of another unwanted item that would fit in the category. Respondents provided examples of items they had received. One respondent (AV1) said his offender sent him lunch at work when he had not asked her to and did not want to receive it. One woman (AV5) said that the offender had left drugs in her home.

Victims did not provide any examples of items that suggest the list in SQ1e is insufficient. Their inclusion of unlisted items (a delivered lunch and drugs) indicates that victims think about unwanted items they received, even if they are not specifically included in the list.

SQ1g. “Made unwanted phone calls to you, left voice messages, sent text messages, or used the phone excessively to contact you?”

The first probe on item G asks respondents what the word “excessively” means to them in this question. Some respondents tried to provide a frequency for what constitutes being excessively contacted via phone.

AV3: “Multiple times over a short period of time, or if it just went on for a month or something after that.”

Like non-victims, victims agreed that it becomes excessive when it is unwanted and continues to happen. Respondent AV2 said, “It can mean more than one, two, or any number of those because they know they are not supposed to talk to me, or they have a restraining order or they are involved

with the person that I have the restraining order on.” As she implied, even two phone calls can be viewed as excessive when they are unwanted.

The second probe on item G asks, “What does an unwanted phone call mean to you?” When asked this probe, victims did not provide a definition, rather, they responded about unwanted phone calls they’ve received from their offender(s).

SQ1h. Spied on you or monitored your activities using technologies such as a listening device, camera, or computer or cell phone monitoring software or “spyware?”

The probe for item H asked respondents to give an example of spyware. Like non-victims, victims also had trouble providing an example of spyware.

AV5: “Isn’t spyware just putting a tracker on someone’s computer?”

Though they could not give a specific example of spyware, victims discussed their experiences in which their offenders used technology to access information about them and monitor their activities.

AV1: “Going into my system and corrupting it, watching what I do on my computer, creating viruses, copying and pasting from my system to hers, even taking pictures from my emails or photos.” This respondent said that he could tell she was on his computer, but did not know how she was able to do that.

AV2: “I have outlook. My outlook is hacked. I have emails that just disappear.”

The fact that victims are not able to provide an example of spyware, but are able to categorize such experiences under item SQ1h supports the decision to remove the term “spyware” from the question.

SQ1i. Tracked your whereabouts with an electronic tracking device or application, such as GPS or an application on your cell phone?

Probes for item I ask respondents to give an example of an application that can track location, and an example of an electronic tracking device. None of the victims were able to name a stand-alone application that can track location. One respondent mentioned that Facebook might be used to track location, since some posts are geo-tagged, and some features will provide your location if it is turned on (such as the chat feature).

When asked to give examples of both tracking applications and electronic tracking devices, most respondents just referred to the GPS location feature on a cell phone and how it can be used by others to track you.

AV1: he “discovered through the police department that [his offender] had the ability to track his phone by use of GPS and location on every place he frequents.” He did not elaborate on exactly how she accesses this information.

Only one respondent (AV5) was able to provide an example of an electronic tracking device, saying that her stalker had put a tracer on her car.

SQ1k. Sent unwanted e-mails or messages using the Internet, for example, using social media apps or websites like Instagram, Twitter, or Facebook?

Only two respondents received the probe asking what “social media apps” means to them in this question. Both mentioned Facebook, and one respondent listed LinkedIn as well. Though only two victims received the probe in Round 1, all five were able to easily answer this question and gave no indication that they were unsure about what social media apps are.

One respondent (AV5) mentioned that his stalker could see activity on his Facebook, and that she would send him texts saying, “I’ve seen you in such a place” and that she could see who he was talking to. The same respondent mentioned this and other instances of his social being monitored by his offender. Since this monitoring behavior is distinct from sending messages via social media apps or sites, we decided to include additional probes to determine whether or not respondents think to include monitoring of social media when answering SQ1k. The following probes were asked after the follow-up probe to SQ1k:

What if I had asked, “Monitored your activities using social media apps like Instagram, Twitter, or Facebook?” How would you answer? What were you thinking of when I said “monitored your activities using social media apps?”

Question SQ1 Revision 1 Findings:

Findings for Non-Victims:

Twenty non-victims answered this question in rounds two, three, and four. For the most part, responses to the probing questions did not differ from those in Round 1 in any significant way. Noteworthy findings are discussed below.

SQ1b. “Sneaked into your home or car and did unwanted things to let you know they had been there?”

We continued to probe on this question to determine if the category should be modified to be more applicable to teens. Almost every teenager mentioned their locker as a place where someone could do unwanted things to let them know they had been there. As previously mentioned, this is something BJS was particularly interested in at the start of this project. Responses during probing indicate that teens do think of their school and locker as a place where someone could do unwanted things. Rather than add the words “school” or “locker” to this item, we added the phrase “or any place else” to capture applicable incidents that occurred in places other than one’s home, car, school, or locker.

SQ1h. “Spied on you or monitored your activities using technologies such as a listening device, camera, or computer or cell phone monitoring software?”

The modified version of item H (with the removal of the term “spyware”) performed well in rounds two through four.

SQ1k. Sent unwanted e-mails or messages using the Internet, for example, using social media apps or websites like Instagram, Twitter, or Facebook?

In probing after SQ1k, we tested the phrase “Monitored your activities using social media apps like Instagram, Twitter, or Facebook?” When asked the follow-up probe “what were you thinking about when I said monitored your activities using social media apps?” most respondents mentioned using social media to track the whereabouts or behaviors of someone else.

TNV9: “I was thinking of stalking. Like keeping track of your location when you’re on the app, where you’re going, who you’re contacting through that app.”

TNV15: “I was thinking about maybe they are spying on you and constantly looking at your profile and posts. Reading about everything you do and everywhere you have been so they are updated to what you have been doing in your life.”

Many teens responded to this probe using a variation of the word stalk (stalking, stalkerish) even though the word stalk(ing) is not mentioned in any of the survey questions. The phrase “monitored your activities” does not seem to have a negative connotation for some teen respondents, though. Two teens mentioned the fact that they know or think their parents monitor their social media presence, but that it is not unwanted. After round 4, the decision was made to include the phrase “Monitored your activities using social media apps like Instagram, Twitter, or Facebook?” as a standalone item (item L) in SQ1. The aforementioned follow-up probe was kept in the protocol to continue to assess how frequently individuals (particularly teens) interpret this item without a negative connotation.

Findings for Victims:

Ten victims answered question SQ1 in rounds two through four. Noteworthy findings are discussed below.

SQ1b. “Sneaked into your home or car and did unwanted things to let you know they had been there?”

We continued to probe on this question to determine if the category should be modified to be more applicable to teens. We only interviewed one teen victim in rounds two through four. She did not mention her school or locker in response to the probe. She said, “I guess wherever you work, maybe a friend’s house or a different family member’s house.” As discussed in the non-victim section on item B in Question SQ1 Revision 1, the decision was made to change the item to “Sneaked into your home, car, or any place else and did unwanted things to let you know they had been there?” to capture applicable incidents that occurred in places other than one’s home, car, school, or locker.

SQ1h. “Spied on you or monitored your activities using technologies such as a listening device, camera, or computer or cell phone monitoring software?”

The modified version of item h (with the removal of the term “spyware”) performed well for victims in rounds two through four.

SQ1k. Sent unwanted e-mails or messages using the Internet, for example, using social media apps or websites like Instagram, Twitter, or Facebook?

In probing after SQ1k, we tested the phrase “Monitored your activities using social media apps like Instagram, Twitter, or Facebook?” When asked the follow-up probe “what were you thinking about when I said monitored your activities using social media apps?” most respondents mentioned using social media to track the whereabouts or behaviors of someone else.

AV10: “Just being on your Facebook page or on any social media page that you have. Kind of like spying on your page.”

TV1: “I was thinking of them seeing what you’re up to or where you’re at or seeing where you post, constantly checking.”

When answering question SQ1, multiple victims mentioned that their activity has been monitored through Facebook and other websites before interviewers asked the probe on monitoring activities via social media. The comments were offered without probing, and were not in response to a specific item. These instances further supported the idea that SQ1 would benefit from an additional

item specifically addressing the issue. After round 4, the decision was made to include the phrase “Monitored your activities using social media apps like Instagram, Twitter, or Facebook?” as a standalone item (item L) in SQ1. The aforementioned follow-up probe was kept in the protocol to continue to assess how well the new item works, and how frequently individuals (particularly teens) interpret this item without a negative connotation (see the non-victim section on item K in Question SQ1 Revision 1 for more information).

Changes that were not item specific:

Since the list of items in SQ1 is so long, there is the possibility that respondents will lose the context of the stem about *unwanted* behaviors and contacts as they answer each item. The wording in items I and L has no negative connotation. To remind respondents that all items are referring to unwanted contacts and behaviors, we included the text “Still thinking about unwanted contacts and behaviors, in the past 12 months, has anyone...” at two places in SQ1 – after item C and item H. We also included the optional text “[Has anyone]” before every item that is not immediately preceded by that phrase. Interviewers have the option to read this text if it becomes necessary to read the item as a complete sentence. For example, if the respondent interrupts the flow of the question by asking for clarification or describing an incident they experienced, it may sound unnatural or confusing for the interviewer to return to the survey by reading an incomplete sentence as a question.

Question SQ1 Revision 2 Findings:

Overall, the second revised version of SQ1 performed well in Round 5. The six victims and nine non-victims were able to easily answer the question. At this point, we reached the point of saturation with the responses to probing questions; victim and non-victim responses in Round 5 are consistent with those in previous rounds. For this reason, items that performed well and probes that did not provide new information during Round 5 are not discussed further in this section. All questions and probes that did provide new insight are discussed below. The changes discussed are not the result of findings specific to victims or non-victims, so there are not separate write-ups by victim status.

SQ1g: Made unwanted phone calls to you, left voice messages, sent text messages, or used the phone excessively to contact you?

Two respondents asked for clarification about whether unwanted phone calls from bill collectors and others like that should be included. After item G, one female teen (B33) asked, “And this isn’t including weird bill collectors or anything?” When probed, she said that she would have said yes in a real interview because she probably would have forgotten that they were not supposed to be included.

The note to exclude sales people and bill collectors is not repeated before the technology questions, which is where it is more applicable. To remind respondents to exclude sales people, solicitors, and bill collectors when answering items G through L, the text between items F and G was modified to read, “Now I want to ask about unwanted contacts or behaviors using various technologies, such as your phone, the Internet, or social media apps. Again, please DO NOT include bill collectors, solicitors, or other sales people. In the past 12 months, has anyone...”

SQ11: Monitored your activities using social media apps like Instagram, Twitter, or Facebook?

Most adults and teens seemed to interpret this item as others using social media to monitor their actions in a manner consistent with stalking.

AV16: “I was thinking of someone following what I’m doing on Facebook. My sister would post information about where we would be hanging out and [the offender] would go there.”

Teens frequently used the term stalking in their response to the probes without any mention of stalking from the interviewers.

TV2: “Like they stalk your profile page, then try to see who is hanging out with you, who is tagging you in what, basically what you’re doing.”

TV3: “That they’re always on and they’re always on your profile and stalking you.”

One adult male non-victim (ANV9) responded to the probe “What were you thinking of when I said ‘monitored your activities using social media apps?’” by saying that he was “thinking of a stalker.” When probed about what actions the stalker would be doing, he said, “observing how often I log in to Facebook, or how many pictures I had liked on Instagram.”

A few of teens did mention thinking about their parents looking at their social media accounts to make sure they’re not doing anything bad. While some teens indicated that this monitoring is unwanted, all but one (TNV17) answered “no” to item L (TNV17 was a unique cases, and is discussed in depth in Section 6.3.6 Noteworthy Cases with the NCVS SVS Screener Questions). This suggests that most teens are able apply the context of SQ1 as a whole to differentiate between parental monitoring of social media and the type of unwanted monitoring the question is trying to capture.

6.3.2 Repetition of Behaviors

NCVS SVS Screener Question SQ2 – asked if “yes” to any of the SQ1 questions

Original Question SQ2: Round 1 – Round 5 and Final Recommendation (no changes made)

SQ2. Has anyone done (this/any of these things) to you more than once in the past 12 months?

- Yes [GO TO SQ3](#)
- No [GO TO CHECK ITEM 2](#)

Original Question SQ2 Findings:

Findings for Non-Victims:

Fifteen of the 39 non-victim respondents answered question SQ2. Of those fifteen, nine answered yes and six answered no. There did not appear to be any issues with the question wording. Some respondents did have trouble answering, but this was due to their uncertainty about whether or not the behavior was repeated. One respondent (ANV22) said, “It’s hard to answer because once they make a friend request on Facebook, it’s there, it’s hard to know if they do it multiple times. I think one person did do it twice.”

Findings for Victims:

Twenty of the twenty-one victims responded “yes” to this question. The final respondent, a teen, initially answered “no” and was screened out since she only reported one contact or behavior in SQ1. During the debriefing it became clear that she misinterpreted SQ2, and that she had experienced other behaviors that are covered in SQ1, but that she did not report. This unique case is discussed in depth in Section 6.3.6 Noteworthy Cases with the Screener Questions.

Respondents had no trouble understanding and answering this question. Unlike the non-victims, victims had no uncertainty about whether the contacts or behaviors were repeated. One woman (AV2) replied, “Yes. This is daily.” When probed on which behaviors were repeated, most respondents said that all of the contacts and behaviors reported in SQ1 were repeated.

6.3.3 Actual Fear or Emotional Distress

NCVS SVS Screener Question SQ3a

Original Question SQ3a: Round 1 – Round 4

SQ3a. Did any of these unwanted contacts or behaviors make you fear for your safety or the safety of someone known to you?

- Yes
- No

Question SQ3a Revision 1: Round 5 and Final Recommendation

SQ3a. Did any of these unwanted contacts or behaviors make you fear for your safety or the safety of someone **close to you?**

- Yes
- No

Original Question SQ3a Findings:

Finding for Non-Victims:

Twelve non-victims answered question SQ3a; five of them answered “yes” and seven of them answered “no.”

Two probing questions were included in the protocol for SQ3a. All respondents who answered the question were asked to say what “fear for your safety or the safety of someone known to you” means to them in this question. Respondents who did not answer “yes” to this question were asked to give an example of an unwanted contact or behavior that *would* make them fear for their safety or the safety of someone known to them.

Many non-victims screened out before this question. We wanted to collect as much data as possible to examine whether victims and non-victims had different interpretations of the phrase “fear for your safety or the safety of someone known to you.” Starting in Round 3, non-victims who screened out were read the text for question SQ3a and asked the follow-up probes. These respondents were not asked to provide an actual answer for SQ3a, as the question is not applicable to them.

Most respondents defined “fear for your safety or the safety of someone known to you,” as worrying about their wellbeing or the wellbeing of people they care about, feeling like they are in danger, and that they could possibly be hurt.

Some respondents specified that the fear is about physical wellbeing, for example, “Grievous bodily harm intending to maliciously hurt you or threaten you,” (ANV20). While others mentioned that the fear can extend beyond worrying about physical harm. One respondent (TNV15) explained, “Fear of safety means if the safety would be of any type of physical, mental, or emotional danger. If they would be negatively affected in any of those ways, that would cause fear for safety.” There were no significant differences between the ways in which men and women interpreted the phrase.

When asked to provide an example of an unwanted contact or behavior that would make them fear for their safety or the safety of someone known to them, respondents mostly mentioned receiving threats of harm to them or someone they care about, whether the threats are verbal, sent via text, or done in person with a weapon. Men differed from women in that all five men mentioned direct, explicit threats. One male (ANV18) said that he would be fearful if someone showed up to his house, but if they were just calling and texting him, he would just ignore them and would not be fearful. While many women did mention direct threats, some also included other behaviors such as someone constantly following them, or tracking their whereabouts using a GPS or a device on their phone.

Findings for Victims:

Fifteen victims answered SQ3a in rounds one through four. Only one victim said “no” to this question. Like non-victims, almost all victims defined the phrase as worrying that someone will physically harm them or someone they care about.

AV6: “Fear for the health and well being of myself and my family members. As in they intend to hurt me and my family.”

TV1: “don’t have the slightest doubt that if he thought he could get away with it, I would already be dead.”

Only one respondent defined the phrase in a way that did not explicitly mention fear of being physically harmed or killed. This respondent (AV1) said, “Fear is that broken trust and a once secure place no longer feels secure. You feel that person becomes capable of doing the unknown or unwanted.”

When asked to provide an example of an unwanted contact or behavior that would make them fear for their safety or the safety of someone known to them, the one individual who received this probing question said, “If the person said that they were going to drive by and kill me. Or if the person was sending pictures that would imply that a friend or family member was being followed.”

The original wording for question SQ3a was not difficult for respondents to understand, or for interviewers to administer. Both SQ3a and SQ6 refer to other individuals in the respondent’s life. The original wording for SQ3a uses the phrase “someone known to you,” while question SQ6 uses the phrase “someone close to you.” The phrase in question SQ3a was changed to “someone close to you” for consistency.

Question SQ3a Revision 1 Findings:

Finding for Non-Victims:

Two non-victims answered SQ3a in Round 5; one answered “no” and the second answered “yes.” The respondent who answered “yes” is a female teen (TNV17). In response to the probe on what the phrase “fear for your safety or the safety of someone known to you” means to her, she replied “My emotional stability. My friendships,” (she did not elaborate on what exactly she meant by this). This is the only respondent whose explanation of the phrase differs from the common interpretation of worrying about the possibility of being harmed. Her definition is not entirely different from the common interpretation, as an effect on emotional stability can be considered emotional harm.

Aside from the aforementioned respondent, responses to probes after SQ3a Revision 1 did not differ from those in previous rounds. The revised version of the question worked well for non-victims.

Findings for Victims:

Six victims answered SQ3a in Round 5. Only one of the six respondents answered “no.” All six individuals defined the phrase “fear for your safety or the safety of someone known to you” as worrying that someone is going to be harmed in some way.

AV18: “It means that he would harm or kill us, specifically me.”

TV3: “That someone can come to my house and attack me or attack my family or attack my friends.”

The individual who responded “no” to this question (TV2) interpreted the phrase the same as the others. She just clarified, “I don’t think anything bad would have happened in my personal experience, it was just annoying.” When asked to provide an example that would cause her fear, she replied, “Threats, if someone kept leaving you messages like ‘hey, if you don’t answer, I’m going to do this and that and that...”

The revised version of SQ3a worked well for victims in Round 5.

NCVS SVS Screener Question SQ3b

Original Question SQ3b: Round 1 – Round 5 and Final Recommendation (no changes made)

SQ3b. Did any of these unwanted contacts or behaviors cause you substantial emotional distress?

- Yes
- No

Original Question SQ3b Findings:

Findings for Non-Victims:

Twelve non-victims answered SQ3b; four individuals responded “yes” and the other eight responded “no.” Most individuals had no trouble answering this question. Two respondents had to talk through their thoughts while answering. For example, one woman (ANV19) told the

interviewer that this question was hard to answer because she didn't know how to categorize her answer. She said that the theft of her car caused her distress, but the distress was only the result of the theft, not of the contact (this respondent answered "no").

Respondents were probed on what "substantial emotional distress" means to them in this question, and asked to provide an example of an unwanted contact or behavior that *would* cause them substantial emotional distress if they answered "no". Starting in Round 3, non-victims who screened out of the survey were read this question for the purpose of answering the two probes; they did not have to provide an answer to question SQ3b as it did not apply to them.

Most respondents defined substantial emotional distress as distress or anxiety that disrupts daily functioning in some way.

ANV13: "I would say that it impacts your daily life for an extended period of time. So it interrupts any kind of daily schedule and changes your lifestyle."

TNV10: "So much emotional pain that you can't function in everyday life or everyday society."

Only two of the non-victims who responded to the probes provided definitions of substantial emotional distress that do not adequately define it. The first (ANV21) said, "Substantial emotional distress means fearing that you are always being watched." While this does not provide an actual definition, this respondent had experienced unwanted contacts and behaviors that caused substantial emotional distress, so she was likely defining the phrase in terms of her experiences. The second inaccurate definition was provided by a teen male (TNV15). He said, "Substantial emotional distress means it's not too serious to me. In general, I would consider it to not be as serious as my family in danger, making you in any way uncomfortable."

When asked to provide an example of an unwanted contact or behavior that *would* cause them substantial emotional distress, respondents gave examples that align with behaviors that are commonly thought to cause substantial distress. The most frequent answer was sexual assault. Other examples include sexual harassment, blackmail, and threats to loved ones. Four teens talked about cyberbullying, threats to post private information or messages, and someone spreading lies about them as having the potential to cause substantial emotional distress; no adult non-victims discussed these types of incidents in response to this probe.

Findings for Victims:

All 21 victims answered this question. Of those, only two victims answered "no," the other 19 answered "yes."

Like non-victims, victims were asked to define "substantial emotional distress." Victims also tended to define substantial emotional distress as distress and anxiety that impacts your everyday life. Most victims went beyond that, though, and provided more in-depth, concrete examples, referring to their own experiences.

AV5: "Difficulty sleeping, the cardinal signs of PTSD and depression, isolating yourself, fear of contacting others, difficulty trusting others, jumpiness, depression, nightmares, difficulty at work."

AV18: “I had panic attacks. I would need to increase the security of my home by installing a security camera. Having episodes of terror being triggered by random things. I still to this day am hyper vigilant. A lot of panic attacks.”

There were no significant differences between the broad definitions provided by men and women. However, none of the six men provided concrete examples from their own experiences. For example, multiple men provided definitions similar to this adult male’s definition, “Making you very nervous, scared, fearing for your life,” (AV6). Whereas many women started with similar definitions, but then went on to describe their post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms and changes they made to their behavior in response to their distress.

The two victims who said the unwanted contacts and behaviors did not cause substantial emotional distress did provide appropriate definitions for the phrase. For example, “If you think about it for a large portion of the day or it causes sleeplessness or insomnia. Or any other physical issues, that is substantial emotional distress,” (AV8). Of these two individuals, one was an adult male, and the other was a teen female. Both answered “yes” to question SQ3a, indicating that the behaviors caused them to fear for their safety.

There was no indication that any victims had an inaccurate interpretation of the phrase “substantial emotional distress.”

6.3.4 Reasonable Fear

NCVS SVS Screener Question SQ4

Original Question SQ4: Round 1 – Round 5 and Final Recommendation (no changes made)

Now I have some additional questions about the time someone {behavior₁}, {behavior₂}, and {behavior_x...}.

[Include all behaviors the respondent reported in SQ1a-k.]

Thinking about the person or people who committed these unwanted contacts or behaviors in the past 12 months, did any of the following occur –

SQ4. Did this person or these people damage or attempt to damage or destroy property belonging to you or someone else in your household?

- Yes
- No

Original Question SQ4 Findings:

Findings for Non-Victims:

Twelve non-victims answered question SQ4. Of those, only two answered “yes” to this question. This question presented no problems for interviewers or non-victim respondents.

Finding for Victims:

Of the 21 victims who answered this question, 14 answered “yes” and seven answered “no.” This question presented no problems for interviewers or victim respondents. One respondent, (AV5) said that this question was too long. This respondent had answered “yes” to every item in SQ1, which are re-read in the text immediately preceding SQ4. This is likely why she felt the question was too long.

NCVS SVS Screener Question SQ5

Original Question SQ5: Round 1 – Round 4

SQ5. [Thinking about the person or persons who committed these unwanted contacts or behaviors in the past 12 months...] Did this person or these people physically attack, attempt to attack, or threaten to attack you?

[Mark all that apply.]

- Yes, physically attack
- Yes, attempt to attack
- Yes, threaten to attack
- No

Question SQ5 Revision 1: Round 5 and Final Recommendation

SQ5. [Thinking about the person or persons who committed these unwanted contacts or behaviors in the past 12 months...] Did this person or these people...

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| Physically attack you? | • Yes • No |
| Attempt to attack you? | • Yes • No |
| Threaten to attack you? | • Yes • No |

Original Question SQ5 Findings:

Finding for Non-Victims:

Five non-victims answered this question in Rounds 1 through 4. Three individuals replied “no,” and two replied “yes.” Interviewers had to probe to determine whether someone physically attacked, attempted to attack, or threatened to attack them.

Findings for Victims:

Fifteen victims answered this question in Rounds 1 through 4. Four of the victims responded “no” to this item. Four of the victims responded “yes” to all three options (physically attack, attempt to attack, and threaten to attack). Four of the victims responded “yes” to threaten to attack. Two responded “yes” to attempt to attack, and one responded “yes” to physically attack.

Six of the victims answered the question by saying, “yes.” As with the non-victims, victims tended to answer this question as a yes/no question. Interviewers then had to clarify that they need to choose which options apply – physically attack, attempt to attack or threatened to attack. For this reason, question SQ5 was changed to a stem question with a forced-choice yes/no format for each of the three options (see Question SQ5 Revision 1 above).

Question SQ5 Revision 1 Findings:

Findings for Non-Victims:

Three non-victims answered this question in Round 5. Two answered “no” to all items. The third answered “yes” to “Threaten to attack you?” The new version of the question performed well for non-victims.

Findings for Victims:

Six victims answered this question in Round 5. Three answered “no” to all items, two answered “yes” to all three items, and the final person answered “yes” to “Attempted to attack you?” and “Threatened to attack you?” There were no problems with this version of the question. Interviewers reported that it was much easier to administer than the previous version, and that they no longer had to probe to get responses.

NCVS SVS Screener Question SQ6

Original Question SQ6: Round 1 – Round 4

SQ6. [Thinking about the person or persons who committed these unwanted contacts or behaviors in the past 12 months...]

Did this person or these people physically attack, attempt to attack, or threaten to attack someone close to you or a pet?

[Mark all that apply.]

- Yes, physically attack
- Yes, attempt to attack
- Yes, threaten to attack
- No

Question SQ6 Revision 1: Round 5 and Final Recommendation

SQ6. [Thinking about the person or persons who committed these unwanted contacts or behaviors in the past 12 months...] **Did this person or these people...**

- | | |
|--|-------------------|
| Physically attack someone close to you or a pet? | • Yes • No |
| Attempt to attack someone close to you or a pet? | • Yes • No |
| Threaten to attack someone close to you or a pet? | • Yes • No |

Original Question SQ6 Findings:

Findings for Non-Victims:

Eight non-victims answered question SQ6 in rounds one through four. Six of them responded, “no,” one responded, “yes, attempt to attack,” and one responded “yes” to all three. Before answering, one individual (ANV17) asked if he was supposed to choose one of them or all of them as a group. After the interviewer reread the question slowly, the respondent said, “I should say yes to all of them.”

Findings for Victims:

Fifteen victims answered question SQ6 in rounds one through four. Eight of those respondents answered “no.” Two respondents answered “yes” to all three types of incidents; one responded “yes” to both physically attack and threaten to attack, one responded “yes” to physically attack,

and one responded “yes” to threaten to attack. Of the seven respondents who reported experiencing a physical attack, attempted attack, or threat to attack, four of them answered this question as a yes/no question without specifying which type of incident it was. Interviewers had to probe to elicit specific responses.

Since the original format of the question often does not elicit appropriate responses without interviewer probing, question SQ6 was changed to a stem question with a forced-choice yes/no format for each of the three options (see Question SQ6 Revision 1 above).

Question SQ6 Revision 1 Findings:

Findings for Non-Victims:

Three non-victims answered the revised version of question SQ6 in Round 5. Of those, two said “no” to all three items, and one said “yes” to “Threaten to attack someone close to you or a pet?” There were no issues with the revised version of SQ6 for non-victims.

Findings for Victims:

Six victims answered the revised version of this question in Round 5. Five of the victims answered “no” to all three items, and one answered “yes” to “Threaten to attack someone close to you or a pet?”

There were no issues with the revised version of SQ6 for victims. Interviewers reported that it was much easier to administer than the previous version, and that they no longer had to probe to get appropriate responses.

6.3.5 Related Behaviors

NCVS SVS Screener Question SQ7

Original Question SQ7: Round 1 – Round 2

SQ7. You indicated that someone {behavior₁}, {behavior₂}, and {behavior...} more than once in the past 12 months. Do you know or suspect that these unwanted contacts or behaviors were related?

By that we mean that the unwanted contacts or behaviors were committed by the same person/people or by others on behalf of that person/people.

- Yes [\[go to survey instructions\]](#)
- No [\[end survey\]](#)
- Don’t know [\[go to survey instructions\]](#)

Question SQ7 Revision 1: Round 3 – Round 4

SQ7. You indicated that someone {behavior₁}, {behavior₂}, and {behavior...} *{(fill If SQ2=Yes) more than once}* in the past 12 months. Do you know or suspect that **any of these unwanted contacts or behaviors were related?**

By that we mean that **any of these unwanted contacts or behaviors were committed by the same person/people or by others on behalf of that person/people.**

- Yes [\[go to survey instructions on page 16\]](#)
- No [\[end survey\]](#)

- Don't know [\[go to survey instructions on page 16\]](#)

Question SQ7 Revision 2: Round 5

SQ7. Thinking about all of the unwanted contacts or behaviors you reported experiencing, do you know or suspect that any of these unwanted contacts or behaviors were committed by the same person/people or by others on behalf of that person/people.

- Yes [\[go to survey instructions on page 17\]](#)
- No [\[go to intro 4 text on page 20\]](#)
- Don't know [\[go to survey instructions on page 17\]](#)

Question SQ7 Revision 3: Changes made after Round 5

SQ7a. Think about all of the unwanted contacts or behaviors you reported experiencing and the person or people who committed them. Do you know or suspect that ANY of these unwanted contacts or behaviors were committed by the same person or people?

- Yes [\[go to survey instructions\]](#)
- No [\[go to SQ7b\]](#)
- Don't know [\[go to survey instructions\]](#)

SQ7b. Do you know or suspect that ANY of these unwanted contacts or behaviors were committed by others on behalf of the same person or people?

- Yes [\[go to survey instructions\]](#)
- No [\[go to survey instructions\]](#)
- Don't know [\[go to survey instructions\]](#)

Question SQ7 Final Recommendation

SQ7 has been removed as it was not performing well. BJS will receive feedback on the removal of SQ7 from the TRP members.

Original Question SQ7 Findings:

Findings for Non-Victims:

Three non-victims answered question SQ7 in rounds one and two. All three answered “no,” which resulted in them being screened out of the survey. None of the non-victims indicated that they had trouble understanding SQ7. However, one of the three respondents (ANV17) that was screened out on the basis of answering “no” to SQ7 was very likely a victim that should have continued with the survey (See Section 6.3.6.1 Potential False Negatives for a more detailed discussion of this case).

Findings for Victims:

All 11 victims ultimately responded “yes” to this question. Respondents were probed on how they were thinking about the term “related” in this question. While most individuals provided a correct interpretation within the context of the question, two individuals indicated that they were thinking of family when thinking about the term “related” in this question.

AV4: “I was thinking of family.”

AV6: “It’s a family, so the same person, or people.”

One respondent (AV5) initially said that the question was “too long” and “weird.” The interviewer had to repeat the question before the respondent answered “yes.” Even though she answered, she said that she wasn’t sure what the question was getting at.

This question was confusing for individuals who experienced multiple behaviors from multiple perpetrators. One respondent (TV1) initially answered “no” because she thought that all of the behaviors had to be from the same individual. Through probing, it became clear that she misinterpreted the question.

TV1: “It’s happened more than once, but two different people have done two different things. So I thought you meant every experience had to be related.”

This respondent would have incorrectly screened out of the survey in a regular interview as the result of not understanding SQ7. After Round 2, we modified the question in two places to indicate that it is asking if any of the contacts were related, rather than all of the contacts. “Do you know or suspect that **any of** these unwanted contacts or behaviors were related? By that we mean that **any of these** unwanted contacts or behaviors were committed by the same person/people or by others on behalf of that person/people.”

The phrase “You indicated that someone {behavior₁}, {behavior₂}, and {behavior...} more than once in the past 12 months.” can be incorrect if a respondent experienced multiple stalking behaviors, but those behaviors did not happen more than once (for example, someone followed them, waited for them, and showed up where they were one time each). In this example, the respondent would say no to item SQ2 about repetition, but will not screen out. It then becomes incorrect to say that they indicated that someone did those behaviors more than once. After Round 2, the question was also changed to make the phrase “more than once” a fill if the respondent said yes to SQ2. With this change, the first revision of question SQ7 read:

“You indicated that someone {behavior₁}, {behavior₂}, and {behavior...} **{(fill If SQ2=Yes) more than once}** in the past 12 months. Do you know or suspect that **any of** these unwanted contacts or behaviors were related?”

By that we mean that **any of these** unwanted contacts or behaviors were committed by the same person/people or by others on behalf of that person/people.”

Question SQ7 Revision 1 Findings:

Findings for Non-Victims:

Five non-victims answered “no” to this question in rounds three and four. None of the respondents indicated that they had trouble understanding the question. The respondents’ discussion of the contacts and who committed them confirm that the incidents were not related.

Findings for Victims:

Four victims answered “yes” to this question in rounds three and four.

Two of the victims were able to easily answer this question, while the other two required interviewer probing to help them make sense of the question. The first respondent (AV12) thought the question was trying to “examine if your husband is physically abusive.” It is difficult to make sense of this response without further clarification from the respondent. When asked about how the behaviors were related, she said that “it’s just anything to control her,” indicating that she was thinking of “related” in the sense of what they all have in common.

The second respondent who had trouble answering this question indicated that she was confused because she had two offenders and did not realize the question was asking if *some* of the acts were committed by the same person. The interviewer noted that she had to spontaneously probe at this point, since the respondent had conveyed, when describing incidents in previous questions, that the same person committed some of the acts.

Question SQ7 is a critical screener question since a respondent’s answer is the final deciding factor in whether or not they screen in to the incident portion of the survey, regardless of the answers to all other screener questions. Depending on their answers, some respondents screen out of the survey before reaching SQ7. If an individual has not screened out by SQ7, if they answer “yes,” they are automatically included in the survey; if they answer “no,” they are immediately screened out. Since this question is so critical, any confusing language that may result in a false positive (someone who is not a stalking victim but who screens in to the survey) or a false negative (a stalking victim who screens out of the survey) must be fixed.

In an attempt to reduce respondent confusion with question SQ7, it was re-written as follows:

“Thinking about all of the unwanted contacts or behaviors you reported experiencing, do you know or suspect that any of these unwanted contacts or behaviors were committed by the same person/people or by others on behalf of that person/people?”

Question SQ7 Revision 2 Findings:

Findings for Non-Victims:

Three non-victims answered question SQ7 in Round 5. Two respondents answered “no” to this question. One respondent (TNV17) answered “yes” to this question. The interviewer made the decision to screen the respondent out based on information provided throughout the interview. This case is discussed in depth in Section 6.3.6 Noteworthy Cases with the NCVS SVS Screener questions.

Two of the respondents were able to accurately interpret what the question was asking.

TNV17: “Do you believe that you were tracked by the same people?” (The respondent reported being tracked by her parents using her phone).

ANV21: “This question is asking if the attacker is having someone do anything to her on their behalf, or if there is any correlation between any of the incidents.”

The third respondent's interpretation is not straightforward, and suggests that she was only thinking of one aspect of the question.

ANV15: "This question is asking if someone I know would be willing to talk to a mutual person they know, and see if they would reach out to her."

This respondent seemed to focus only on the part of the question asking if the acts were committed by others on behalf of someone else. She also seems to have limited potential offenders to people known by her, as indicated by her mention of a "mutual person they know."

Findings for Victims:

All six victims answered "yes" to this question. Three of the respondents were able to easily answer the question and provide an appropriate interpretation of the question.

One respondent (AV16) was able to answer the question after having it re-read. Her interpretation of the question was, "The question is asking if any incidents were caused by her attacker." Though this interpretation is not entirely accurate about the question as a whole, she was able to process the fact that it is asking whether one person committed multiple contacts and behaviors.

The final two respondents had a very hard time understanding and answering this question. After the interviewer read the question, one respondent (AV18) said, "I have no idea what you just said." The interviewer repeated the question, to which the respondent replied, "that's a really weirdly phrased question. I'm not processing it at all." The interviewer had to pause after the first comma, wait for the respondent to process and talk through what that language meant, then read the second half of the question. The respondent said that two ex-boyfriends were harassing her, but gave no indication about whether or not either committed multiple contacts or behaviors. The interviewer had to extensively probe on the situation to determine that at least one of the offenders committed multiple contacts or behaviors. The respondent offered an unsolicited opinion, "I don't like that question at all."

The other respondent who had trouble with this question (TV2) initially replied, "What do you... like... that was a long sentence. Can I read it?" After reading the question herself, she was able to break apart the question and provide an accurate interpretation of what it was asking. When probed on why the question was confusing, she said that the length of the question made it difficult to understand.

Since this version of the question made it difficult for respondents to answer without interviewer probing and assistance, it was revised again. Multiple respondents processed only on one aspect of the question, focusing on the phrase "by others on behalf of that person/people." To make it clear that this question applies to either a single main offender *or* other offenders working on behalf of a main offender, it was split into a two-part question, with each part addressing only one concept. This change also shortens the question somewhat. Both factors are important for reducing cognitive burden on the respondents. The third revised version of SQ7 is as follows:

SQ7a. Think about all of the unwanted contacts or behaviors you reported experiencing and the person or people who committed them. Do you know or

suspect that ANY of these unwanted contacts or behaviors were committed by the same person or people?

- Yes [go to survey instructions]
- No [go to SQ7b]
- Don't know [go to survey instructions]

SQ7b. Do you know or suspect that ANY of these unwanted contacts or behaviors were committed by others on behalf of the same person or people?

- Yes [go to survey instructions]
- No [go to survey instructions]
- Don't know [go to survey instructions]

Question SQ7 Final Recommendation:

As discussed above, because question SQ7 is so important in deciding who is screened out of the survey, any possible source of respondent confusion is problematic. Though we revised question SQ7 after Round 5 (discussed above under “Question SQ7 Revision 2 Findings”), we were not able to cognitively test the new version of the question. Since we cannot confirm that the revised question reduces respondent confusion, the decision was made to remove question SQ7. The sponsor decided that they are more comfortable screening individuals into the survey without question SQ7 than incorrectly screening victims out because they say that the contacts and behaviors related as a result of not understanding the question. BJS is consulting with experts in the field of stalking and victimization who attended the Technical Review Panel to see if they had any concerns with question SQ7 being dropped.

6.3.6 Noteworthy Cases with the NCVS SVS Screener Questions

For the most part, the screener questions performed well with accurately screening victims of stalking into the survey, and screening individuals who have not been stalked out of the survey. Of the 60 individuals who went through the screener, only six of them were potentially screened in or out incorrectly. These cases were important in guiding decisions to modify questions to reduce future errors in the screening process.

Two additional cases of interest are explained in section 6.3.6.3 Self-Identified Victims who Correctly Screened Out.

The noteworthy aspects of all aforementioned interviews are discussed below.

6.3.6.1 Potential False Negatives

TV1:

Respondent TV1 initially answered yes to one item in SQ1 (SQ1g, unwanted phone calls or messages). She answered no to SQ2 and was screened out. During the debriefing, she started discussing other behaviors she experienced that were done by the same person. These behaviors could have been categorized in the SQ1 items, but were phrased slightly different (i.e., *handing* her gifts at school rather than sending or leaving them), so the respondent did not report them when answering SQ1.

Because of her comments in the debriefing, we returned to the interview to proceed as a victim. The decision to proceed with the interview even though her answers screened her out (a false negative) was made because at this point, we had not found any teen victims to test the main incident questions on.

This respondent also would have incorrectly screened out at SQ7 had it not been for her comments during the first debriefing. When answering SQ7, she was thinking of the stalking behaviors done by a boy at school, as well as repeated unwanted phone calls from her boyfriend after they get in a fight. She interpreted SQ7 meaning ALL behaviors had to be done by the same person. Through probing, we established her understanding of the question, as well as the fact that multiple stalking behaviors were committed by the same boy at school.

Evidence from other teen victims suggests that her failure to categorize certain behaviors (showing up at her bus stop or outside of her classroom at school) in the SQ1 items were unique to her interpretation. Many other teens gave examples similar to her experiences as things that would fit in the existing categories. Her difficulty with SQ7 was used as evidence that the question needed to be revised for clarification (and ultimately removed).

ANV17:

Respondent ANV17 screened out after answering “no” to question SQ7. The respondent was not probed on his interpretation of SQ7, but all of the circumstances surrounding this interview suggest that he did misinterpret it. This respondent self-identified as a victim of stalking by responding to the recruiting email distributed by our contact at the Stalking Resource Center. He reported experiencing multiple unwanted contacts and behaviors, said that they were repeated, caused him to fear for his safety, and caused him substantial emotional distress. He responded yes to at least one item in both of the reasonable fear questions (SQ5 and SQ6). When discussing his experiences throughout the interview, he always refers to one offender, his ex-wife. During debriefing, the interviewer asked if he believes the contacts and behaviors he experienced were stalking; he said that he did believe he was stalked.

ANV15:

This respondent replied yes to SQ1a (followed around or watched), SQ1d (showed up, rode or drove by places where she was), and SQ1k (sent unwanted emails or messages using the internet). These behaviors did not cause her fear for her safety (because she is “feisty”); they did cause her substantial emotional distress. The respondent screened out after answering “no” to SQ7. The interviewer did not probe to elicit details that would indicate whether or not the behaviors were related. However, when asked what the question means in her own words, this respondent was unable to provide an accurate interpretation of SQ7. During debriefing, the respondent said she did believe the contacts and behaviors she experienced were stalking. This case is a possible false negative due to a misunderstanding of SQ7.

ANV21:

This respondent said “yes” to SQ1a through SQ1f, SQ1g, SQ1h, SQ1k, and SQ1L. The contacts and behaviors were repeated, caused her to fear for her safety, and caused substantial emotional distress. When answering SQ7, she replied “no” because the behaviors were from two different people. However, this is likely a false negative due to a misunderstanding of the question. When

discussing incidents reported in SQ1, it became clear that she experienced two separate stalking incidents at different times with two different men each doing multiple behaviors/repeated behaviors. During debriefing, this respondent said she did believe the contacts and behaviors she experienced were stalking.

6.3.6.2 Potential False Positives

With the inclusion of 16 and 17 year olds in the 2016 sample, this study was necessary to assess possible issues that are specific to teens. Of particular importance to the sponsor was the possibility of false positives in cases where teens interpret their parents' *normal* monitoring of their behaviors and activities as a version of stalking. Many teens use the term stalk(ing) liberally, applying it to situations that do not actually constitute stalking (i.e. viewing a new crush's Facebook page to see old pictures and learn about their interests may be jokingly referred to as "stalking" their page). Some parents use cell-phone applications to track their teens' whereabouts for safety reasons, and this type of behavior might be considered unwanted. For these reasons, it was critical to determine whether or not teens can distinguish between these behaviors, and the types of unwanted contacts and behaviors measured in the SVS.

Of the twenty teen interviews, only one respondent (TNV17) incorrectly screened in to the survey by reporting that her parents track her whereabouts and monitor her online activity. This case is discussed below. It is important to note that it is possible for parents to stalk their children. For example, an ex-husband who is stalking or harassing his ex-wife may extend the unwanted contacts and behaviors to their children. For this reason, not all teen reports of being stalked by a parent can be considered a false positive.

TNV17:

This respondent said yes to being tracked (SQ1i) and her social media being monitored (SQ1l), both by her parents. When probed about the unwanted contacts and behaviors, she said that her mom tracked her using the 'track my iPhone' application just in case she lost her phone. When probed more, the teen explained that she found out her mom tracked her because they were in the same room when her mom turned on that app, and the app lets an iPhone user know who is tracking it. The teen said that it was 'creepy' so she turned off some settings within the app, but said her mom may still be able to track her. The interviewer noted that she "seemed to be laughing a little about this app and that her mom used it." When probed about her social media being monitored, she said her mom had monitored her, and she considers it to be a bad thing. When probed, she said that her mom will tell her that she was looking at her social media, or that she will look at it in front of her. She also said the behaviors have happened more than once (yes to question SQ2.)

Some other teens in the survey mentioned that their parents monitored their social media or tracked their whereabouts, but did not respond "yes" to items I or L. They were able to deduce that, though the behavior might be unwanted, it does not apply within the context of the survey questions.

Based on how teens in the study define fear for their safety and substantial emotional distress, it appears that even if they reported experiencing these behaviors, most teens would then screen out at SQ3a/b (fear and emotional distress). This teen said yes to both SQ3a and SQ3b. Her definitions of the concepts were somewhat different from those provided by all other respondents. She defined

fear for her safety as her “emotional stability [and her] friendships,” and defined substantial emotional distress as “a lot of crying.” Most importantly, though her responses to the screener questions qualify her as a victim of stalking, when she was asked if she believes the unwanted contacts and behaviors she experienced were stalking, she said “no” while laughing. This further confirms that this teen was not a victim of stalking. It is possible that she did not consider the context of SQ1 when answering each individual item, and that her interpretation of fear for her safety was different from its intended meaning. Evidence from all teen interviews suggests that her case was unique, and that most teens will not have the same issues when responding to the survey.

TV3:

This case is not quite a potential false positive, but is worth mentioning for further consideration. The respondent is a female teen. Based on her responses to the screener questions, she meets the criteria for a victim of stalking. She said yes to SQ1j (posted or threatened to post inappropriate, unwanted, or personal info online) and SQ1k (sent unwanted emails or messages using the internet). The contacts and behaviors were repeated. They caused her to fear for her safety, saying she thought the offenders were going to go to her house and attack her. The behaviors caused substantial emotional distress in the form of panic attacks and suicidal tendencies. The behaviors were related, in that they were committed by a group of three teens from school working together.

The victim labeled the situation as cyberbullying, and her experiences do meet the criteria for cyberbullying, as well as the criteria for stalking. When asked during debriefing if she thought the unwanted contacts and behaviors were stalking, she replied that she did not. The respondent defined stalking as, “Someone who’s overly obsessed with a person to the point of following them, watching them, being overly infatuated to the point where they can’t get enough of the person and it’s making the other person uncomfortable.” The overlaps between bullying/cyberbullying and stalking warrant further consideration regarding whether and how to distinguish between the two.

6.3.6.3 Self-identified Victims Who Correctly Screened Out

Two individuals self-selected into the survey, identifying as victims of stalking in response to the recruiting message. Their conception of what it means to be a stalking victim did not align with the official definition, and the screener questions resulted in them correctly screening out of the survey.

ANV14:

This respondent said yes to SQ1a (being followed or watched), and SQ1f (the offender harassing or repeatedly asking others for information about her). She said the contacts and behaviors caused her to fear for her safety, and yes to “attempt to attack” [someone close to her] in SQ6. In reference to item SQ1a about being followed, she said, “yes, once when I was walking.” When discussing the incident in SQ1f, she said that an unwanted thing “happened to her neighbor. She parked her car and they got into her car and they stole some of her stuff. She reported it to the police.” This is also the incident she referenced when answering SQ6, saying someone attempted to attack her neighbor. It is unclear why she included this incident in SQ1f, as it does not fit in that category and did not happen to her.

The respondent correctly screened out after answering “no” to SQ7. During debriefing, this respondent said she did believe the contacts and behaviors she experienced were stalking. She defined stalking as “Someone looking at you very closely and trying to figure out where this person lives and what they do for a living and trying to find the person’s information.” This individual responded to the ad seeking victims of stalking because she believed that being followed once constituted stalking.

ANV18:

The respondent answered “yes” to SQ1 items C, D, E, G, J, K. He said the contacts were repeated, and caused him to fear for his safety. When discussing items C, and D, he said he was thinking of sales people who go door to door. For item D, he was thinking of sales people leaving flyers and junk mailing. For item G, he again referenced sales people, even commenting that he’s received text messages from sales people. In item J, he was thinking of friends posting pictures of him on their social media without his permission. He did not elaborate on the behaviors referenced in item K. When discussing why the behaviors caused him to fear for his safety, he said that he didn’t like that sellers knew his address to mail things or come to his home, and that he feels intimidated when a sales person is at his home.

This respondent self-identified as a victim of stalking when responding to the message seeking stalking victims. After going through the survey questions, he said that he did not believe the contacts and behaviors he experienced were stalking. It is unclear why he initially self-identified as a victim of stalking.

6.4 NCVS Supplemental Victimization Survey: Incident Questions

6.4.1 Offender Information

NCVS SVS Incident Question Q1

<u>Original Question Q1: Round 1 – Round 5 and Final Recommendation (no changes made)</u>	
Q1. Thinking about these unwanted contacts or behaviors in the past 12 months, how many different people have done these things to you?	
• One	[skip to Q3 – SINGLE OFFENDER]
• Two	[ask Q2a]
• Three or more – Enter number of people. _____	[ask Q2a]
• Don’t know	[skip to Intro Text A]

NCVS SVS Incident Question Q2a

<u>Original Question Q2a: Round 1 – Round 5 and Final Recommendation (no changes made)</u>	
Q2a. Did these people act alone or together as a team?	
• Alone	[skip to Intro Text A – SINGLE OFFENDER]
• Together	[ask Q2b]
• Don’t know	[skip to Intro Text A – SINGLE OFFENDER]

NCVS SVS Incident Question Q2b

Original Question Q2b: Round 1 – Round 5 and Final Recommendation (no changes made)

Q2b. Of the people who did these things to you, is there ONE person who you would consider to be the MOST responsible for these unwanted contacts or behaviors?

- Yes [skip to Intro Text A — SINGLE OFFENDER]
- No [skip to Q8a– MULTIPLE OFFENDERS]

6.4.2 Single Offender Questions

NCVS SVS Incident Question Q3

Intro Text A. Thinking about the person who has done this most recently, ...

Original Question Q3: Round 1 – Round 5 and Final Recommendation (no changes made)

Q3. Is this person male or female?

- Male
- Female
- Don't know

NCVS SVS Incident Question Q4

Original Question Q4: Round 1 – Round 5 and Final Recommendation (no changes made)

Q4. How old would you say this person is?

- Under 15
- 15-17
- 18-20
- 21-24
- 25-34
- 35-49
- 50-64
- 65+
- Don't know

NCVS SVS Incident Question Q5

Original Question Q5: Round 1 – Round 5 and Final Recommendation (no changes made)

Q5. Is this person Hispanic or Latino/a?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Original Question Q5 Findings:

Most respondents were able to easily answer this item. One respondent did not answer this question, they instead gave a race. They needed to be probed to give the correct answer. One respondent said “I hope there is a, ‘are they middle eastern?’ question in there.” One respondent

asked why Hispanic origins was a separate question. We have no revision suggestion for this question.

NCVS SVS Incident Question Q6

Original Question Q6: Round 1 – Round 5 and Final Recommendation (no changes made)

Q6. What race or races is this person? You may select more than one. Is this person. . .

[Select one or more.]

- White?**
- Black or African American?**
- American Indian or Alaska Native?**
- Asian?**
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander?**
- Don't know**

Original Question Q6 Findings:

One respondent, who had given a race as their first answer to Q5, chose to say 'other' and say what their offender's ethnicity is. One respondent said that her offender would have answered differently if asked this question. "Out of those options he might go for White. He would have said Latino for race." One respondent answered but said that there are categories that are missing from this question. Otherwise, all respondents answered this question with no problems. While answering the previous item, one respondent said she would like 'middle eastern' to be added. We have no revision suggestion for this question.

NCVS SVS Incident Question Q7

Original Question Q7: Round 1 – Round 5 and Final Recommendation (no changes made)

Q7. What was your relationship to the person who committed these unwanted contacts or behaviors when they first began?

[Instruction: Record the relationship at the time the unwanted contacts or behaviors began and not at the time of this interview.]

RELATIVE – offender was the respondent's –

- Spouse or partner
- Ex-spouse or ex-partner
- Parent or step-parent
- Own child or step-child
- Sibling/step-sibling
- Other relative – Specify _____

NONRELATIVE – offender was the respondent's –

- Boyfriend or girlfriend
- Ex-boyfriend or ex-girlfriend
- Other current romantic or sexual partner
- Other former romantic or sexual partner

- Friend or ex-friend
- Acquaintance
- In-laws or relative of spouse or ex-spouse
- Roommate, housemate, boarder
- Schoolmate
- Neighbor
- Customer/client
- Student
- Patient
- Supervisor (current or former)
- Employee (current or former)
- Co-worker (current or former)
- Teacher/school staff
- Stranger
- Other nonrelative – Specify _____
- Unable to identify the person

Original Question Q7 Findings:

Two respondents (AV1 and AV5) answered, but they missed the time frame of the question (“... when they first began?”). They required probing in order to get to their correct answer. One respondent (AV8) would not answer until he heard all the answer choices. Aside from these, all the other respondents answered this question with no problems. We have no revision suggestion for this question.

6.4.3 Multiple Offenders Questions

The Multiple Offenders questions collect data on the demographic characteristics of offenders, relationship to the victim, and relationship between offenders. These questions are asked when more than one individual is responsible for the unwanted contacts and behaviors, the individuals worked together as a team, and the respondent indicates that there is not one person they would consider most responsible.

6.4.3.1 Use of Vignettes in the Multiple Offenders section

Questions in the Multiple Offenders section were only applicable to three of the 21 respondents who screened into the survey as victims. To ensure we could gather sufficient data during the cognitive testing, we added a vignette during Round 4 to end of the survey for respondents who screened out as non-victims.

Vignettes are a useful tool in cognitive interviews when only a small number of respondents go through a particular series of questions in a survey. Though those questions are only applicable to respondents who have experienced a particular situation, previous research on vignettes has shown that a respondent does not need to experience that situation to interpret how it should be reported (Martin, 2006). By using a vignette, we were able to cognitively test the multiple offender questions on an additional 16 respondents (seven respondents from Round 4, nine from Round 5).

The vignette provided respondents with a hypothetical situation in which an individual is experiencing unwanted contacts and behaviors committed by three people. Respondents were

asked to read the vignette and then pretend they are the individual experiencing the behaviors as they answer a series of questions to the best of their ability.

Two variants of the vignette were created; female respondents received a vignette using the name Maria, while male respondents received a vignette using the name Mark. The two variants of the vignette were identical in every other way.

Interviewers read the following intro text to respondents before providing them with the vignette and asking them the multiple offender questions.

“There is one last task I would like your help with. We would like to gather more information on how the next questions work for different situations. Please take a few minutes to read the following situation.” [Interviewer hands vignette to respondent]

After they have had a chance to read the vignette: “Now I’d like you to pretend that you are Maria/Mark as I ask a few questions. Please answer the questions to the best of your ability.”

Vignette Version 1 (used in Round 4):

“A group of friends has been sending Maria/Mark threatening emails and text messages a few times a week. In this group, there are two males and one female. One of the males is Asian, and the other two people are white. The Asian male appears to be in his 20s. The other two individuals are 18 years old. Maria/Mark works with all three individuals.

Pretend you are Maria/Mark as you answer the next questions.”

While the first version of the vignette worked well to allow respondents to answer the questions as if they were Maria/Mark, the phrasing used in the vignette caused some confusion about the age of the Asian male and the relationships of the three offenders. We slightly modified the vignette to reduce respondent confusion to ensure that any problems that respondents encountered were due to the question wording rather than the vignette.

Vignette Version 2 (used in Round 5):

Maria/Mark has been getting threatening emails and text messages a few times a week from some of her coworkers. In this group of coworkers, there are two males and one female. One of the males is Asian, and the other two people are white. The Asian male appears to be around 24 or 25. The other two individuals are 18 years old. The three individuals sending the messages are all friends with each other.

Pretend you are Maria/Mark as you answer the next questions.”

NCVS SVS Incident Question Q8a

Original Question Q8a: Round 1 – Round 5 and Final Recommendation (no changes made)

Q8a. Are these people male or female?

- All male [skip to Q9]
- All female [skip to Q9]
- Don't know sex of any offenders [skip to Q9]
- Both male and female [continue to check item #3]

NCVS SVS Incident Question Q8b

Original Question Q8b: Round 1 – Round 5

Q8b. Were these people mostly male or mostly female?

- Mostly male
- Mostly female
- Evenly divided
- Don't know

Question Q8b Revision 1: Final Recommendation

Q8b. **Are most of these people male or female?**

- **Most are male**
- **Most are female**
- Evenly divided
- Don't know

Testing Gender Identity Findings:

Researchers were concerned that using the phrases “mostly male” and “mostly female” may cause some confusion. There is increasing awareness of the concept of gender fluidity, a gender identity in which gender can vary over time or consist of a combination of identities. By using the phrases “mostly male” and “mostly female” there is a possibility of some respondents interpreting this as a question about the gender identity of the offenders.

Original Question Q8b Findings:

Overall, this question was not problematic. Individuals who had experienced unwanted contacts and behaviors, as well as non-victims who received the vignette were able to answer this question without difficulty. However, one teen respondent who received the vignette in Round 5 confirmed the researchers concern. The respondent correctly answered the question, but made a face upon hearing the question, prompting the interviewer to probe on why she made the face. The respondent (TNV12) replied, “Because you can interpret that question as, like, are the people themselves mostly male. Like, do they identify mostly as male on the gender spectrum.”

Since the researchers were already concerned about the potential for misinterpretation of the question, this response confirmed that some respondents might think of gender identity or gender fluidity when hearing the original question wording. To address this issue, the final recommendation for this question wording is “Are most of these people male or female?” Response options were also changed to match the new question wording.

NCVS SVS Incident Question Q9

Original Question Q9: Round 1 – Round 5 and Final Recommendation (no changes made)

Q9. How old would you say these people are?

[Mark all that apply.]

- Under 15
- 15-17
- 18-20
- 21-24
- 25-34
- 35-49
- 50-64
- 65+
- Don't know

NCVS SVS Incident Question Q10a

Original Question Q10a: Round 1 – Round 5 and Final Recommendation (no changes made)

Q10a. Are any of these people Hispanic or Latino/a?

- Yes [\[ask Q10b\]](#)
- No [\[skip to Q11a\]](#)
- Don't know [\[skip to Q11a\]](#)

NCVS SVS Incident Question Q10b

Original Question Q10b: Round 1 – Round 5

Q10b. Were these people mostly Hispanic, mostly non-Hispanic, or an equal number of Hispanic and non-Hispanic?

- Mostly Hispanic or Latino/a
- Mostly non-Hispanic
- Equal number of Hispanic and non-Hispanic
- Don't know

Question Q10b Revision 1: Final Recommendation

Q10b. Are most of these people **Hispanic, non-Hispanic, or an equal number of Hispanic and non-Hispanic?**

- **Most are** Hispanic or Latino/a
- **Most are** non-Hispanic
- Equal number of Hispanic and non-Hispanic
- Don't know

Original Question Q10b Findings:

Respondents did not have trouble answering the original version of Q10b. Similar to question Q8b, though, use of the phrases “mostly Hispanic” and “mostly non-Hispanic” could result in misinterpretation of the question. Some respondents might interpret this as asking about the proportion of their ethnicity that is Hispanic (e.g. a person with only one Hispanic grandparent identifying as one-quarter Hispanic, thus being mostly non-Hispanic). To clarify, the question

wording and response options the final recommendation removes the potentially problematic phrases.

NCVS SVS Incident Question Q11a

Original Question Q11a: Round 1 – Round 5

Q11a. What race or races are these people? Were they...

[Select one or more.]

- White?**
- Black or African American?**
- American Indian or Alaska Native?**
- Asian?**
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander?**
- Don't know**

Question Q11a Revision 1: Final Recommendation

Q11a. What race or races are these people? **Are they...**

[Select one or more.]

- White?**
- Black or African American?**
- American Indian or Alaska Native?**
- Asian?**
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander?**
- Don't know**

Original Question Q11a Findings:

The original wording for question Q11a did not cause any issues during the cognitive testing. However the final recommendation fixes the inconsistency in grammatical tense throughout the question.

NCVS SVS Incident Question Q11b

Original Question Q11b: Round 1 – Round 5

Q11b. What race were most of these people?

- Mostly White
- Mostly Black or African American
- Mostly American Indian or Alaska Native
- Mostly Asian
- Mostly Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- Equal number of each race
- Don't know

Question Q11b: Final Recommendation

Q11b. What race **are most of these people?**

- **Most are** White
- **Most are** Black or African American
- **Most are** American Indian or Alaska Native
- **Most are** Asian

- **Most are** Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- Equal number of each race
- Don't know

Original Question Q11b Findings:

The original wording for question Q11b did not cause any issues during the cognitive testing. The final recommendation suggests changing response options to keep the phrasing consistent with the phrasing used in the question. Additionally, the word “were” was changed to “are” to remain consistent with the tense used in other questions in this section.

NCVS SVS Incident Question Q12

Original Question Q12: Round 1 – Round 4

Q12. What was your relationship to the people who committed these unwanted contacts or behaviors when they first began?

[Mark all that apply.]

RELATIVE – offenders were the respondent's –

- Spouse or partner
- Ex-spouse or ex-partner
- Parent or step-parent
- Own child or step-child
- Sibling/step-sibling
- Other relative – Specify _____

NONRELATIVE – offenders were the respondent's –

- Boyfriend or girlfriend
- Ex-boyfriend or ex-girlfriend
- Other current romantic or sexual partner
- Other former romantic or sexual partner
- Friend or ex-friend
- Acquaintance
- In-laws or relative of one of the offenders
- Roommate, housemate, boarder
- Schoolmate
- Neighbor
- Customer/client
- Student
- Patient
- Supervisor (current or former)
- Employee (current or former)
- Co-worker (current or former)
- Teacher/school staff
- Stranger
- Other nonrelative – Specify _____
- Unable to identify the person

Question Q12 Revision 1: Round 5 and Final Recommendation

Q12. What was your relationship to the people who committed these unwanted contacts or behaviors when they first began?

[Mark all that apply.]

RELATIVE – offenders were the respondent’s –

- Spouse or partner
- Ex-spouse or ex-partner
- Parent or step-parent
- Own child or step-child
- Sibling/step-sibling
- Other relative – Specify _____

NONRELATIVE – offenders were the respondent’s –

- Boyfriend or girlfriend
- Ex-boyfriend or ex-girlfriend
- Other current romantic or sexual partner
- Other former romantic or sexual partner
- Friend or ex-friend **of the respondent**
- Acquaintance
- In-laws or relative of one of the offenders
- Friends of one of the offenders**
- Roommate, housemate, boarder
- Schoolmate
- Neighbor
- Customer/client
- Student
- Patient
- Supervisor (current or former)
- Employee (current or former)
- Co-worker (current or former)
- Teacher/school staff
- Stranger
- Other nonrelative – Specify _____
- Unable to identify the person

Original Question Q12 Findings:

The original wording for question Q12 did not cause any issues during the cognitive testing.

A response option, “Friends of one of the offenders,” was added to capture situations in which some of the offenders have no direct relationship with the respondent, but are friends with another offender who does have a relationship with the respondent. For example, one offender is the respondent’s ex-boyfriend, and the other offenders are the ex-boyfriend’s friends who have no other connection to the respondent.

Since the newly added option includes the word friends, another response option was changed from “Friend or ex-friend” to “Friend or ex-friend of the respondent” to provide further distinction between the two categories.

Question Q12 Revision 1 Findings:

The revised version of question Q12 performed well with the modified and newly added response options.

NCVS SVS Incident Question Q13

Original Question Q13: Round 1 – Round 4

Q13. Please describe the general nature of the group. For example, was it an ex-partner working with others, friends, classmates or peers, co-workers, in-laws or family members or friends of the offender, fraternity, sorority, members of a gang or other organized crime group, etc.?

- Ex-partner working with others
- Friends
- Classmates or peers
- Co-workers
- In-laws or family members of the offender
- Friends of the offender
- Fraternity or Sorority
- Members of a gang or other organized crime group
- Other – specify _____

Question Q13 Revision 1: Round 5 and Final Recommendation

Q13. How do the people who committed these unwanted contacts or behaviors know each other? Are they...

[Mark all that apply]

- **Friends?**
- **Classmates or peers?**
- **Co-workers?**
- **In-laws or family members?**
- **Members of a Fraternity or Sorority?**
- **Members of a gang or other organized crime group?**
- **Or do they know each other in some other way? – specify _____**

Original Question Q13 Findings:

The original question was difficult for interviewers to administer and for respondents to answer. The length of the question, number of response options listed, and the phrasing of the response options made it difficult for interviewers to read the question fluently. Long, complex questions may become confusing to respondents, and potentially increase the likelihood of respondents answering the question without fully understanding what is being asked.

With this question in particular, the usage of conjunctions makes it a more difficult sentence to parse. The word "or" is being used to provide alternate entities/paraphrases for some of the possible groups (classmates OR peers, in-laws OR family members OR friends of the offender). This is already a long list with an implicit "or" between each of the answer options, so it's cognitively difficult to try to separate it into phrases that make sense with or's that list sub-groups within each individual option. When people hear "or," they have to decide on the spot whether you are using "or" to mean that you are adding another entry to the list and the "or"

delineates the new possibility, or using "or" to mean that there's another entity or term in the existing item.

Between Round 1 and Round 4, nine respondents answered this question; two were victims and seven were non-victims who received the vignette. Of those nine respondents, three were initially unsure about how to interpret the question. One respondent (TNV10) asked, "Their relationship to me or their relationship to each other?" The other two responded in a way that clearly indicated they were describing their relationship to the offenders.

Question Q13 Revision 1 Findings:

The revised version of question Q13 performed well in Round 5. Two victims and seven non-victims who received the vignette were able to easily answer the question without issue. Interviewers provided feedback that the revised question was much easier to administer than the original version of the question.

6.4.4 Duration of stalking

NCVS SVS Incident Question Q14a

Original Question Q14a: Round 1 – Round 5 and Final Recommendation (no changes made)

Q14a. How long have these unwanted contacts or behaviors been happening to you?

- Less than one month
- One month to less than six months
- Six months to less than one year
- One year to less than two years
- Two years to less than three years
- Three years to less than five years
- Five years or more
- Don't know

Original Question Q14a Findings:

Most respondents had no issue when answering this question. However, one respondent said that this amount was hard to measure, she is unsure if her offender was exhibiting these behaviors while they were still married, but she didn't notice the behavior until she started divorce proceedings. We have no revision suggestion for this question.

NCVS SVS Incident Question Q14b

Original Question Q14b: Round 1 – Round 5 and Final Recommendation(no changes made)

Q14b. How did you find out that these unwanted contacts or behaviors were happening to you?

- The offender told me
- Someone else told me
- I figured it out on my own
- Don't know, don't remember

Original Question Q14b Findings:

Many respondents gave different answers that amounted to ‘I figured it out on my own:’

AV3: "Yea they were happening to me (chuckles)".

AV5: She said “Well, he assaulted me. I saw them.”

AV11: He said, “I thought about everything that was happening.” He said he tested his stalker by changing his schedule, and she still followed him.

AV13: (Raises her voice slightly) "Probably because I was getting attacked!"

No respondents answered that they didn’t know/remember. One respondent would not answer until the answer choices were read to him. We have no revision suggestion for this question.

6.4.5 Frequency of stalking

NCVS SVS Incident Question Q15

Original Question Q15: Round 1 – Round 4

Q15. In the past 12 months, how many times would you say the unwanted contacts or behaviors occurred? _____ [Interviewer: enter number of times or estimate from R.]

Question Q15 Revision 1: Round 5 and Final Recommendation

Q15. In the past 12 months, how many times would you say the unwanted contacts or behaviors occurred? **Would you say...**

- **Two to ten times**
- **Eleven to fifty times**
- **More than fifty times**
- **Too many times to count**
- **Don’t know, don’t remember**

Reasons for testing Question Q15:

The sponsors were interested in testing an open-ended version of this question. They wanted to know how easy it would be to code a respondent’s answer. The sponsors were curious if there needed to be common frequencies in the answer options in order for interviewers to code them, e.g. once a day = 365, once a week = 52.

Original Question Q15 Findings:

Some respondents reported that answering this question was difficult:

AV3: “That's a tough question...” they went on to say they didn’t know if simultaneous communication attempts counted as one attempt, or as multiple attempts. They said it would have been even harder to answer if the behaviors had gone on for a long time.

AV13: “It was very hard because that’s not the correct answer. It's probably more than that its been going on for a year... You can't pinpoint how many times someone has contacted you excessively or followed you excessively. How would you know?”

Some respondents gave a frequency instead of a number or estimate.

TV1: “A specific number? Pretty often. I would just say it happened often when we were in contact.”

Some respondents gave a range.

AV10: The respondent answered “How many times? I’m gonna say 50+. Because if you’re saying 12 months, I know it’s more than 20, I know it’s more than 30.”

Some respondents said this range (or their number answer if they gave one) was easy to come up with, they knew a behavior happened a certain amount of times a week or month, so they multiplied. Others, as mentioned earlier, said it was hard to answer and count every instance of behavior. Some respondents said their answer was just a guess.

AV13: “I just guessed. That’s not going to be a correct estimate. I just guessed. I don’t know, a lot, excessive, that’s the word excessive right?”

It was not easy to determine a single number for every respondent, and some respondents reported difficulty or expressed frustration when trying to recall how many times the behaviors happened. We decided to test a version that had broad ranges as answer choices, in order to decrease burden on the respondents.

Question Q15 Revision 1 Findings:

All respondents were able to answer this question, and reported that answering was easy. One respondent gave a specific number. One respondent said the behaviors occurred a certain amount of times per day, and had been going on for 3 years. The other four respondents gave an answer as one of the ranges read aloud. Some said what made it easier to answer were the ranges in the response options.

AV18: “Between the two of them I know it was more than 10 and it was definitely less than 50.” She said it was easy to choose a category and was thinking of all behaviors. The interviewer asked if she could have come up with a more precise number and she said no.

There were no other comments on this question, so it was kept this way for the final recommendation.

6.4.6 Motive for stalking

NCVS SVS Incident Question Q16

Original Question Q16: Round 1 – Round 3

Q16. Why do you think (this person/these people) started doing these things to you? Was it because...? Any other reasons?

[Read and mark all that apply.]

- They wanted retaliation or revenge?
- They wanted affection?
- They felt rejected?
- They were obsessed with you?
- They planned to commit a crime?
- They had already committed a crime?
- They wanted power and control?
- They felt like they could do these things to you?
- Any other reason? – Specify _____
- Don't know

Question Q16 Revision 1: Round 4 – Round 5 and Final Recommendation

Q16. Why do you think (this person/these people) started doing these things to you? Was it because...? ~~Any other reasons?~~

~~[Read and mark all that apply.]~~

- | | |
|--|-------------------|
| They wanted retaliation or revenge? | • Yes • No |
| They wanted affection? | • Yes • No |
| They felt rejected? | • Yes • No |
| They were obsessed with you? | • Yes • No |
| They planned to commit a crime? | • Yes • No |
| They had already committed a crime? | • Yes • No |
| They wanted power and control? | • Yes • No |
| They felt like they could do these things to you? | • Yes • No |
| Any other reason? | • Yes • No |
| – Specify _____ | |
| Don't know | |

Original Question Q16 Findings:

Respondents first heard this item as an open-ended question, and then were asked the question again with the response options read. This initial test was done to see if these categories adequately capture the most common motives for stalking, as perceived by the victim. Most of the responses to the open ended item were not exactly the same wording to the response options, but could be easily categorized.

AV3: “I think it was with the intent to sexually assault me but I'm not totally sure.”

AV5: “Because I tried to leave. Because they think you're their property.”

After asking the question with the answer choices read, almost all respondents were able to answer, and all selected more than one answer.

One respondent reacted negatively to this question. She felt that this question could be traumatic for victims; it made her feel like she was responsible for the behavior of the offender, when she really was unsure of his motivations both now and at the time they started.

Some respondents selected ‘any other reason,’ as well.

AV2: “Ignorance of the law.”

AV3: Rooted in domestic violence.

AV6: He said his “antagonists had connections with law enforcement, and that those law enforcement officers overlooked everything they did.”

AV9: “Mental problems.”

One respondent (AV8), when hearing ‘any other reason,’ repeated one of the reasons already listed and that he had already said yes to: “I guess retaliation.”

While responses to the open-ended question could be aligned with one or two of the response options provided, most respondents selected multiple response options when they heard them. The original question wording for Q16 was not problematic. However, existing research shows that the forced-choice format performs better than the mark-all format for two reasons. Previous studies found that respondents endorse more response options in a forced-choice format than in a mark-all format (Smyth, Dillman, Christian, & Stern 2006). Research also shows that respondents take longer to answer in the forced-choice format, suggesting that the format stimulates deeper processing of the question and options than the mark-all format (Smyth et al., 2006). The wording used in question Q16 was not changed, but the format of the question was changed from mark-all to forced-choice.

Question Q16 Revision 1 Findings:

Three respondents offered other reasons. One (AV13) interrupted the interviewer to say “Drugs. That’s it.” Another (AV15) said that she has something her offender wants. A third (AV16) said their offender was crazy.

There were no other issues with this question, so it was kept this way for the final recommendation.

6.4.7 Reasonable fear follow-up

NCVS SVS Incident Question Q17a

Original Question Q17a: Round 1 – Round 3

Q17a. Earlier you indicated that this person/these people physically attacked or attempted to attack you. How did they attack or attempt to attack you?

[Read all options and mark all that apply.]

- Hitting, slapping, pushing, or knocking you down?**
- Choking or strangling you?**
- Raping or sexually assaulting you?**
- Attacking you with a weapon or other object?**
- Hitting, chasing or dragging you with a vehicle?**
- Attacking you in some other way?**

Specify _____

ASK Q18a if R answered “yes, threaten to attack” in SQ5, ELSE SKIP TO _____

[ask Q17b]

ASK Q18a if R answered “yes, threaten to attack” in SQ5, ELSE SKIP TO _____

Question Q17a: Round 4 - Round 5 and Final Recommendation

Q17a. Earlier you indicated that this person/these people physically attacked or attempted to attack you. **Did they attack or attempt to attack you...**

By hitting, slapping, pushing, or knocking you down?

- Yes • No

By choking or strangling you?

- Yes • No

By raping or sexually assaulting you?

- Yes • No

With a weapon or other object?

- Yes • No [if “YES” ask Q17b]

By hitting, chasing or dragging you with a vehicle?

- Yes • No

Or did they attack you in some other way?

- Yes • No

Specify _____

Original Question Q17a Findings:

The original wording for question Q17a did not cause any issues during the cognitive testing.

When asked during probing if there were other ways that someone could attack them, some respondents suggested that it can be non-physical, such as using social media to post private photos. However, these methods are outside the scope of the question, since it is referring to physical attacks. Additionally, those types of non-physical behaviors are covered in the screener question SQ1 on unwanted contacts and behaviors. The lack of other alternatives proposed by respondents suggests that this list adequately covers the common ways in which someone physically attacks another person.

As previously mentioned, existing research shows that the forced-choice format performs better than the mark-all format. For this reasons, question Q17a was changed from mark-all-that-apply to a forced response of yes or no for each item.

Question Q17a Revision 1 Findings:

The respondents did not have any difficulty understanding the modified version of question Q17a.

NCVS SVS Incident Question Q17b

Original Question Q17b: Round 1 – Round 3

Q17b. What was the weapon or object? Anything else?

[Mark all that apply.]

- Hand gun (pistol, revolver, etc.)
- Other gun (rifle, shotgun, etc.)
- Knife
- Other sharp object (scissors, ice pick, axe, etc.)
- Blunt object (rock, club, bat, etc.)
- Other – Specify _____

**ASK Q18a if R
answered “yes,
threaten to attack” in
SQ5, ELSE SKIP TO
CHECK ITEM 6**

Question Q17b Revision 1: Round 4 – Round 5 and Final Recommendation

Q17b. What was the weapon or object? Was there any other weapon or object used?

[Mark all that apply.]

- Hand gun (pistol, revolver, etc.)
- Other gun (rifle, shotgun, etc.)
- Knife
- Other sharp object (scissors, ice pick, axe, etc.)
- Blunt object (rock, club, bat, etc.)
- Other – Specify _____

**ASK Q18a if R
answered “yes,
threaten to attack” in
SQ5, ELSE SKIP TO
CHECK ITEM 6**

Original Question Q17b Findings:

While the original wording for question Q17b did not present any problems for interviewers or respondents, the follow-up phrase “Anything else?” was modified for clarification. It is useful to re-orient the respondent to what the question is referring to. In the event that a respondent provides additional context surrounding the use of a weapon or object, the follow-up question, “Anything else?” may no longer appear to reference weapons or objects, and may possibly be misunderstood or misinterpreted by the respondent.

Question Q17b Revision 1 Findings:

The revised version of the question, which now includes the follow-up, “Was there any other weapon or object used?” performed well in Round 5. No further revisions are needed.

NCVS SVS Incident Question Q18a

Original Question Q18a: Round 1 – Round 3

Q18a. Earlier you indicated that this person/these people threatened to attack you. What was the threat?

[Read all options and mark all that apply.]

- To hit, slap, push, or knock you down?** [skip to Q19a]
- To choke or strangle you?** [skip to Q19a]
- To rape or sexually assault you?** [skip to Q19a]
- To harm you with a weapon or other object?** [ask Q18b]
- To hit, chase, or drag you with a vehicle?** [skip to Q19a]
- To kill you?** [skip to Q19a]
- Threaten you in some other way?**
Specify _____ [skip to Q19a]

Question Q18a Revision 1: Round 4 - Round 5 and Final Recommendation

Q18a. Earlier you indicated that this person/these people threatened to attack you. **Did they threaten...?**

To hit, slap, push, or knock you down?

- Yes • No

To choke or strangle you?

- Yes • No

To rape or sexually assault you?

- Yes • No

To harm you with a weapon or other object? [if “YES” ask Q18b]

- Yes • No

To hit, chase, or drag you with a vehicle?

- Yes • No
- To kill you?**
- Yes • No
- Or did they threaten you in some other way?**
- Yes • No
- Specify _____

Original Question Q18a Findings:

Similar to the findings of Q17a, the original wording of the question did not cause any issues for respondents during cognitive testing, but was changed from a mark-all format to a forced-choice format. This was done because the forced-choice format tends to capture more responses and promote a deeper processing of the question and options than the mark-all format (Smyth et al., 2006).

When asked if there were other ways that someone could threaten to harm them, some respondents suggested there are psychological ways that someone could threaten to harm them, like social media.

Question Q18a Revision 1 Findings:

The modification of question Q18a performed well during the cognitive testing.

NCVS SVS Incident Question Q18b

Original Question Q18b: Round 1 – Round 3

Q18b. What was the weapon or object they threatened to use? Anything else?

[Mark all that apply.]

- Hand gun (pistol, revolver, etc.)
- Other gun (rifle, shotgun, etc.)
- Knife
- Other sharp object (scissors, ice pick, axe, etc.)
- Blunt object (rock, club, blackjack, etc.)
- Other Specify _____

Question Q18b Revision 1: Round 4 – Round 5 and Final Recommendation

Q18b. What was the weapon or object they threatened to use? **Was there any other weapon or object used?**

[Mark all that apply.]

- Hand gun (pistol, revolver, etc.)
- Other gun (rifle, shotgun, etc.)
- Knife
- Other sharp object (scissors, ice pick, axe, etc.)
- Blunt object (rock, club, blackjack, etc.)
- Other Specify _____

as the interviewer reads it. For example, the respondent may have been waiting to hear the complete list before responding to a given category. Alternatively, he may have required more time to process each category, but the interviewer interpreted his non-response during the pause as a “no” and moved on to the next category too quickly.

Changing the question format from mark-all to forced choice addresses both of these potential issues. The forced-choice format requires the respondent to process each response option on it’s own, rather than as part of a list, and the interviewer must wait to receive a yes or no answer before moving on to the next category. As previously mentioned, the forced-choice format may also promote deeper processing of the question, and result in respondents endorsing more response options than the mark-all method (Smyth et al., 2006).

Question Q19a Revision 1 Findings:

The modification of question Q19a performed well during the cognitive testing in Round 4 and Round 5.

NCVS SVS Incident Question Q19b

Original Question Q19b: Round 1 – Round 3

Q19b. Earlier you indicated that this person/these people threatened to physically attack someone close to you or a pet. Who did they threaten?

[Mark all that apply.]

- A child?
- A spouse or partner?
- A boyfriend or girlfriend?
- Another family member?
- A friend or co-worker?
- A pet or companion animal?
- Himself/herself (offender)?
- Someone else?

Specify _____

Question Q19b Revision 1: Round 4 - Round 5 and Final Recommendation

Q19b. Earlier you indicated that this person/these people threatened to physically attack someone close to you or a pet. Who did they threaten?

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|
| A child? | • Yes • No |
| A spouse or partner? | • Yes • No |
| A boyfriend or girlfriend? | • Yes • No |
| Another family member? | • Yes • No |
| A friend or co-worker? | • Yes • No |
| A pet or companion animal? | • Yes • No |
| Himself/herself (offender)? | • Yes • No |
| Someone else? | • Yes • No |

Specify _____

Original Question Q19b Findings:

Similar to previous questions, the original wording of the question did not cause any issues for respondents during cognitive testing, but was changed from a mark-all format to a forced-choice format. This was done because the forced-choice format tends to capture more responses and promote a deeper processing of the question and options than the mark-all format (Smyth et al., 2006).

Question Q19a Revision 1 Findings:

The modification of question Q19b performed well during the cognitive testing in Round 4 and Round 5.

6.4.8 Help-seeking

Again, questions that were not problematic during cognitive testing and that did not require revisions are not discussed in this section of the report.

NCVS SVS Incident Question Q20

Original Question Q20: Round 1 – Round 5 and Final Recommendation (no changes made)

Q20. During the past 12 months did you or someone else call or contact the police to report any of these unwanted contacts or behaviors?

- Yes [skip to Q22]
- No [ask Q21]

NCVS SVS Incident Question Q21

Original Question Q21: Round 1 – Round 5 and Final Recommendation (no changes made)

Q21. What was the reason the unwanted contacts or behaviors were not reported to the police?

[INTERVIEWER: READ STRUCTURED PROBE BELOW AND MARK ANSWERS THAT APPLY]

STRUCTURED PROBE –

Was the reason because you dealt with it another way, it wasn't important enough to you, police wouldn't do anything, police wouldn't help, you fear the person, or was there some other reason?

- Dealt with it another way
 - Reported to another official (guard, apt. manager, employer, hospital official, school official, military official, etc.)
 - Private or personal matter (handled myself or family member or friend handled it)
 - Told other non-officials (parents, friends, other family members, etc.)
- Not important enough to respondent
 - Too minor, not a police matter, not serious enough
 - Not clear it was a crime
 - Not sure that harm was intended

- Police wouldn't do anything
 - Didn't think the police would be able to stop behaviors
 - Could not find or identify offender
 - Had no legal authority/wrong jurisdiction
 - Lacked or had incorrect restraining, protection, or no-contact order
 - Not enough evidence/lack of proof
- Police wouldn't help
 - Police wouldn't believe respondent
 - Police would think it was respondent's fault
 - Police didn't think it was important enough, wouldn't want to be bothered or get involved
 - Offender was a police officer, justice officer
 - Police would be inefficient, ineffective
 - Had previous negative experience with the police
- Feared offender
 - Afraid of reprisal or escalation of behavior by the offender or others
- Other reasons
 - Respondent does not trust or is afraid of police
 - Respondent felt ashamed or embarrassed
 - Didn't want offender to get in trouble with the law
 - Offender was (ex)spouse or (ex)partner
 - Respondent obtained a restraining, protection, or no-contact order instead
 - Respondent moved away
 - Offender moved away
 - For the sake of the children
 - Unwanted contacts/behaviors stopped
 - Other – specify _____
 - Don't know

[WHEN COMPLETED WITH Q21, SKIP TO Q27]

NCVS SVS Incident Question Q22

Original Question Q22: Round 1 – Round 5 and Final Recommendation (no changes made)

Q22. During the past 12 months, who reported (the/these) unwanted contacts or behaviors to the police? Anyone else? [Mark all that apply.]

- Respondent
- Respondent's friend
- Neighbor
- Respondent's family, in-laws, spouse, parents, children, relatives
- Respondent's girl/boyfriend, partner
- Doctor, nurse
- Clergy or faith leader
- Social worker, counselor, other mental health professional
- School official, teacher, faculty, or staff
- Boss, employer, co-worker

- Stranger, bystander
- Security guard, security department
- Police on scene
- Other – specify _____
- Don't know

NCVS SVS Incident Question Q23

Original Question Q23: Round 1 – Round 3

Q23. Taking into account all of the times the police were contacted in the past 12 months regarding these unwanted contacts or behaviors, what did they do? Anything else?

[Mark all that apply.]

- Took a report
- Talked to or warned offender
- Arrested the offender or took the offender into custody
- Told respondent to get a restraining, protection, or no-contact order
- Referred respondent to a court or prosecutor's office
- Referred respondent to services, such as victim assistance
- Gave advice on how to protect self
- Took respondent to another location such as a hospital or shelter
- Asked for more information/evidence
- Other – specify _____
- Don't know
- Took no action

**SKIP TO
Q25A**

[ASK Q24]

Question Q23 Revision 1: Round 4 – Round 5 and Final Recommendation

Q23. Taking into account all of the times the police were contacted in the past 12 months regarding these unwanted contacts or behaviors, what did **the police do? Anything else?** [Mark all that apply.]

- Took a report
- Talked to or warned offender
- Arrested the offender or took the offender into custody
- Told respondent to get a restraining, protection, or no-contact order
- Referred respondent to a court or prosecutor's office
- Referred respondent to services, such as victim assistance
- Gave advice on how to protect self
- Took respondent to another location such as a hospital or shelter
- Asked for more information/evidence
- Other – specify _____
- Don't know
- Took no action

**SKIP TO
Q25A**

[ASK Q24]

Original Question Q23 Findings:

Six victims answered this question during rounds one, two, and three. The original wording for the question caused no problems; all respondents were easily able to answer the question, and

interviewers were able to categorize their open-ended responses using the response options listed. Though the wording did not cause problems with the six respondents, we changed the word “they” to the “the police” for clarity. With the original wording, the word “they” can be vague, and leaves the possibility that respondents might interpret it to mean “what did the offenders do?” or “What did the person contacting the police on your behalf do?”

Question Q23 Revision 1 Findings:

The revised version of question Q23 performed well and did not require further revisions. One respondent said that the police escorted her to court, which did not fit in the existing categories, but the interviewer categorized under “other” and specified what the respondent said.

NCVS SVS Incident Question Q24

Original Question Q24: Round 1 – Round 3

Q24. Why do YOU think the police took no action? Any other reason? [Mark all that apply.]

- Police did not think crime occurred
- Could not find or identify offender
- Had no legal authority/wrong jurisdiction
- Lacked or had incorrect restraining, protection, or no-contact order
- Didn't have evidence/lack of proof
- Didn't believe respondent/take respondent seriously
- Thought it was respondent's fault
- Didn't think it was important enough, didn't want to be bothered or get involved
- Were inefficient, ineffective
- Offender was a police officer, justice officer
- Offender was well-connected in the community, was friend/relative with local authorities
- Respondent was not old enough to file a report (i.e. needed a guardian)
- Other – specify _____
- Don't know

Question Q24 Revision 1: Round 4 – Round 5 and Final Recommendation

Q24. Why do YOU think the police took no action? Any other reason? [Mark all that apply.]

- Police did not think crime occurred
- Could not find or identify offender
- Had no legal authority/wrong jurisdiction
- Respondent** lacked or had incorrect restraining, protection, or no-contact order
- Didn't have evidence/lack of proof
- Didn't believe respondent/take respondent seriously
- Thought it was respondent's fault
- Didn't think it was important enough, didn't want to be bothered or get involved
- Were inefficient, ineffective
- Offender was a police officer, justice officer
- Offender was well-connected in the community, was friend/relative with local authorities

- Respondent was not old enough to file a report (i.e. needed a guardian)
- Other – specify _____
- Don't know

Original Question Q24 Findings:

Three victims answered this question during rounds one, two, and three. The original wording for question caused no problems; all respondents were easily able to answer the question, and interviewers were able to categorize their open-ended responses using the response-options listed. One respondent (AV9) would not give a reason until the interviewer read the options.

The question wording and response options did not cause problems with the three respondents or affect the interviewers ability to categorize the open-ended responses. However, we modified the response option, “Lacked or had incorrect restraining, protection, or no-contact order,” to “Respondent lacked or had incorrect restraining, protection, or no-contact order.” This was done to make it clear to interviewers that the category is referring to a respondent not receiving a restraining order or having an incorrect one. The original wording can be interpreted as either the respondent lacking or having an incorrect restraining order or the police lacking or having an incorrect restraining order.

Question Q24 Revision 1 Findings:

No respondents received question Q24 in rounds four and five. The revision was minor and added clarification to the response option, and the question performed well before the revision, so there is no reason to believe that the revised question is problematic.

NCVS SVS Incident Question Q25a

Original Question Q25a: Round 1 – Round 5 and Final Recommendation (no changes made)

Q25a. Were criminal charges filed against the person(s) who committed these unwanted contacts or behaviors?

- Yes [\[ask Q25b\]](#)
- No [\[skip to Q27\]](#)
- Don't know [\[skip to Q27\]](#)

NCVS SVS Incident Question Q25b

Original Question Q25b: Round 1 – Round 5 and Final Recommendation (no changes made)

Q25b. What were the criminal charges filed?

- Stalking
- Something else – Specify _____
- Both, stalking and something else – Specify [other charge] _____
- Don't know

NCVS SVS Incident Question Q26

Original Question Q26: Round 1 – Round 5 and Final Recommendation (no changes made)

Q26. What was the final outcome of the criminal charges filed against the person(s) who committed these unwanted contacts or behaviors? Anything else? [Mark all that apply.]

- Still pending
- Dismissed/not guilty
- Convicted/guilty
- Plead to lesser charge
- Fined
- Court order intervention/counseling program
- Criminal no-contact order
- Probation
- Jailed/imprisoned
- Other – Specify _____
- Don't know

NCVS SVS Incident Question Q27

Original Question Q27: Round 1 – Round 5 and Final Recommendation (no changes made)

Q27. In the past 12 months, did you seek any help or advice concerning these unwanted contacts or behaviors from any office or agency – other than police – that assists victims of crime?

- Yes [\[ask Q28a\]](#)
- No [\[skip to Q29\]](#)
- Don't know [\[skip to Q29\]](#)

NCVS SVS Incident Question Q28a

Original Question Q28a: Round 1 – Round 5 and Final Recommendation (no changes made)

Q28a. Did you receive any services or assistance from this or these offices or agencies?

- Yes [\[ask Q28b\]](#)
- No [\[skip to Q28c\]](#)
- Don't know [\[skip to Q29\]](#)

NCVS SVS Incident Question Q28b

<u>Original Question Q28b: Round 1 – Round 2</u>		
Q28b. What type of services did you receive?		
Crisis hotline counseling?	● Yes	● No
Counseling or therapy?	● Yes	● No
Legal or court services?	● Yes	● No
Assistance getting a restraining, protection, or no-contact order?	● Yes	● No
<input type="checkbox"/> Financial assistance	● Yes	● No
Shelter or safehouse services	● Yes	● No
Safety planning?	● Yes	● No
Risk or threat assessment?	● Yes	● No
Medical advocacy?	● Yes	● No
Victim compensation?	● Yes	● No
Any other services? – specify _____	● <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	● No
<u>Question Q28b Revision 1: Round 3 - Round 5 and Final Recommendation</u>		
Q28b. What type of services did you receive?		
Crisis hotline counseling?	● Yes	● No
Counseling or therapy?	● Yes	● No
Legal or court services?	● Yes	● No
Assistance getting a restraining, protection, or no-contact order?	● Yes	● No
Federal or state victim compensation?	● Yes	● No
Short-term or emergency financial assistance?	● Yes	● No
Shelter or safehouse services?	● Yes	● No
Safety planning?	● Yes	● No
Risk or threat <input type="checkbox"/> assessment?	● Yes	● No
<input type="checkbox"/> Medical advocacy?	● Yes	● No
Victim compensation?	● <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	● No
Any other services? – specify _____ <input type="checkbox"/>	● Yes	● No

Original Question Q28b Findings:

When answering question Q28b, respondents were asked probing questions to determine what they believe the categories are referring to. For each service a respondent reported receiving, they were asked what types they received. If respondents indicated that they do not know what a response option meant, they were asked what they think the response option might mean. When respondents replied “no” to an option, they were asked what they think is included in the service.

Respondents were able to accurately identify what services most of the response options are referring to. However, respondents in Round 1 and Round 2 had some difficulty distinguishing between financial assistance and victim compensation. One respondent, who works in victim assistance and advocacy, told the interviewer that financial assistance and victim compensation are linked, and wondered if others who do not work in that field would be able to know the difference between the two options. Despite her comments suggesting that she is better able to

differentiate between the categories than others not working in that field, this respondent was still unsure of which category would cover certain expenses, such as parking fees [directly related to dealing with the victimization].

Due to the difficulty respondents had in differentiating between the two categories, the decision was made to change the wording of the two response options to provide more context and distinguish between the categories. The sponsors at BJS provided us with more specific phrasing for the response options. The category “Victim compensation” was changed to “Federal or state victim compensation,” and “Financial assistance” was changed to “Short-term or emergency financial assistance.”

Question Q28b Revision 1 Findings:

Four respondents answered this question in rounds three through five. The modified response options did not present any problems for respondents. Three of the four respondents were able to accurately identify what victim compensation is referring to in the new response option. One respondent (AV12) said, “Federal or state victim compensation is being compensated for the costs associated with being a victim, so like medical bills.” The fourth (AV13) respondent was said that federal and state victim compensation includes “just helping out with the case.” She was able to define short-term or emergency financial assistance, saying she received it to move out of her house when her offender still posed a threat to her.

Some victims who have not received federal or state victim compensation or short-term or emergency financial assistance may not know exactly what each service entails. Victims who have received the services are better able to accurately identify which category is applicable to them. Cognitive interview results show that the new response options provide a greater level of detail to help respondents better differentiate between the two options.

NCVS SVS Incident Question 28c

Original Question Q28c: Round 1 – Round 3

Q28c. You reported that you sought services from an office or agency that assists victims of crime, but did not receive them. Why did you not receive these services? Was it because...

Any other reason? [Mark all that apply.]

- Services were not available in your local area?**
- You did not have a means of transportation to and from the service provider?**
- You did not have childcare to go to seek services?**
- The service provider could not accommodate you (e.g. no beds available in shelter)?**
- You were unable to take time off of work or school to seek services?**
- There were language barriers?**
- You were not eligible for services?**
- Some other reason? – specify _____**

Question Q28c Revision 1: Round 4 - Round 5 and Final Recommendation

Q28c. You reported that you sought services from an office or agency that assists victims of crime, but did not receive them. Why did you not receive these services? Was it because...

Services were not available in your local area?

- Yes • No

You did not have a means of transportation to and from the service provider?

- Yes • No

You did not have childcare to go to seek services?

- Yes • No

The service provider could not accommodate you (e.g. no beds available in shelter)?

- Yes • No

You were unable to take time off of work or school to seek services?

- Yes • No

There were language barriers?

- Yes • No

You were not eligible for services?

- Yes • No

Some other reason?

- Yes • No – Specify _____

Original Question Q28c Findings:

Only one respondent answered the original version of this question. This respondent was easily able to answer this question. As previously mentioned, the decision to change some questions from the mark-all format to the forced-choice format was made to promote a deeper processing of the question, and to increase the likelihood that respondents will endorse more of the applicable response options.

Question Q28c Revision 1 Findings:

Only one respondent answered the revised version of this question. This respondent did not have any problems answering the forced-choice version of this question.

6.4.9 Self-protective actions

NCVS SVS Incident Question Q29

Original Question Q29: Round 1 – Round 3

Q29. There are things that people might try to do to protect themselves or stop the unwanted contacts or behaviors from continuing. In the past 12 months, have you done any of the following because of the unwanted contacts or behaviors. Have you...

- **Changed your day-to-day activities?**
 - Yes [If yes, ask R which activities they changed and mark all that apply below.]
 - No
 - Take time off from work or school?

- Change or quit a job or school?
- Change the way (route or method of transportation) you went to work or school?
- Avoid relatives, friends, or holiday celebrations?
- Change your usual activities outside of work or school?
- Stay with friends or relatives or had them stay with you?
- Move or change where you live?
- Alter your appearance to be unrecognizable?

- **Taken self-defensive actions or other security measures?**

- Yes [If yes, ask R which self-defensive actions they took and mark all that apply below.]
- No
 - Take self-defense or martial arts classes?
 - Get pepper spray?
 - Get a gun?
 - Get any other kind of weapon?
 - Change or install new locks or a security system?

- **Changed your personal information?**

- Yes [If yes, ask R what personal information changed and mark all that apply below]
- No
 - Change your social security number or name?
 - Change e-mail address?
 - Shut down or change information on social media accounts?
 - Change telephone numbers?
 - Get a new phone or computer?
 - Block unwanted calls, messages, or other communications?

- **Applied for a restraining, protection, or no-contact order?**

- Yes
- No

- **Did you do anything else to protect yourself or stop the unwanted contacts or behaviors from continuing?**

- Yes – Specify _____
- No

Question Q29 Revision 1: Round 4 – Round 5

Q29. There are things that people might try to do to protect themselves or stop the unwanted contacts or behaviors from continuing. In the past 12 months, have you done any of the following because of the unwanted contacts or behaviors. Have you...

- **Changed your day-to-day activities?**

- Yes [If yes, ask R which activities they changed and mark all that apply below.]
- No
 - Take time off from work or school?

- Change or quit a job or school?
- Change the way (route or method of transportation) you went to work or school?
- Avoid relatives, friends, or holiday celebrations?
- Change your usual activities outside of work or school?
- Stay with friends or relatives or had them stay with you?
- Move or change where you live?
- Alter your appearance to be unrecognizable?

- **Taken self-defensive actions or other security measures?**

- Yes [If yes, ask R which self-defensive actions they took and mark all that apply below.]
- No
 - Take self-defense or martial arts classes?
 - Get pepper spray?
 - Get a gun?
 - Get any other kind of weapon?
 - Change or install new locks or a security system?
 - Block unwanted calls, messages, or other communications?**

- **Changed your personal information?**

- Yes [If yes, ask R what personal information changed and mark all that apply below.]
- No
 - Change your social security number or name?
 - Change e-mail address?
 - Shut down or change information on social media accounts?
 - Change telephone numbers?
 - Get a new phone or computer?
 - ~~Block unwanted calls, messages, or other communications?~~

- **Applied for a restraining, protection, or no-contact order?**

- Yes
- No

- **Did you do anything else to protect yourself or stop the unwanted contacts or behaviors from continuing?**

- Yes – Specify _____
- No

Question Q29 Revision 2: Final Recommendation

Q29. There are things that people might try to do to protect themselves or stop the unwanted contacts or behaviors from continuing. In the past 12 months, have you done any of the following because of the unwanted contacts or behaviors. Have you...

- **Changed your day-to-day activities?**

Yes [If yes, ask R which activities they changed and mark all that apply below.]

No

- Take time off from work or school?
- Change or quit a job or school?
- Change the way (route or method of transportation) you went to work or school?
- Avoid relatives, friends, or holiday celebrations?
- Change your usual activities outside of work or school?
- Stay with friends or relatives or had them stay with you?
- Move or change where you live?
- Alter your appearance to be unrecognizable?
- Other – specify _____

• **Blocked unwanted calls, messages, or other communications?**

Yes

No

• **Taken self-defensive actions or other security measures?**

Yes [If yes, ask R which self-defensive actions they took and mark all that apply below.]

No

- Take self-defense or martial arts classes?
- Get pepper spray?
- Get a gun?
- Get any other kind of weapon?
- Change or install new locks or a security system?
- ~~Block unwanted calls, messages, or other communications?~~
- Other – specify _____

• **Changed your personal information?**

Yes [If yes, ask R what personal information changed and mark all that apply below.]

No

- Change your social security number or name?
- Change e-mail address?
- Shut down or change information on social media accounts?
- Change telephone numbers?
- Get a new phone or computer?
- Other – specify _____

• **Applied for a restraining, protection, or no-contact order?**

Yes

No

• **Did you do anything else to protect yourself or stop the unwanted contacts or behaviors from continuing?**

- Yes – Specify _____
- No

Original Question Q29 Findings:

The original placement of one response item, “Block unwanted calls, messages, or other communications,” did not capture all occurrences of these actions. One respondent (AV10) mentioned blocking unwanted calls as a security measure, but answered no to the category that includes blocking calls, “Changed your personal information?” Also, multiple respondents only mentioned blocking calls or messages, and changing their phone number after further probing. The decision was made to move "Block unwanted calls, messages, or other communications" from the heading “Changed your personal information?” to “Taken self-defensive actions or other security measures?”

Question Q29 Revision 1 Findings:

For the most part the revised version of the question performed well with the modified response option. However, one respondent mentioned that they blocked their perpetrator when asked if they changed their personal information, and not when asked about other security measures they have taken to protect themselves. Other respondents had mentioned blocking calls and texts at other points in the interview, but said no to both “Changed your personal information?” and “Taken self-defensive actions or other security measures?” Because of the inconsistencies in how respondents categorized blocking calls, and the frequency with which respondents mentioned blocking calls throughout the interviews, the decision was made to break out the "Block unwanted calls, messages, or other communications" response option into a stand-alone question.

NCVS SVS Incident Question Q30

Original Question Q30: Round 1 – Round 3

Q30. Some people might ask others for help in order to protect themselves or to stop the unwanted contacts or behaviors from continuing. In the past 12 months, did you
—

[Mark all that apply.]

- Ask for advice or help from friends or family?
- Ask people not to release information about you?
- Hire a private investigator?
- Ask for advice or help from an attorney?
- Talk to a counselor or therapist?
- Talk to a doctor or nurse?
- Talk to your Clergy or faith leader?
- Talk to your boss or employer?
- Talk to your teacher or school official?
- Contact your building or workplace security person?
- None of the above

Question Q30 Revision 1: Round 4 – Round 5 and Final Recommendation

Q30. Some people might ask others for help in order to protect themselves or to stop the unwanted contacts or behaviors from continuing. In the past 12 months, did you
—

Ask for advice or help from friends or family?	• Yes • No
Ask people not to release information about you?	• Yes • No
Hire a private investigator?	• Yes • No
Ask for advice or help from an attorney?	• Yes • No
Talk to a counselor or therapist?	• Yes • No
Talk to a doctor or nurse?	• Yes • No
Talk to your Clergy or faith leader?	• Yes • No
Talk to your boss or employer?	• Yes • No
Talk to your teacher or school official?	• Yes • No
Contact your building or workplace security person?	• Yes • No
None of the above	

Original Question Q30 Findings:

The original wording for question Q30 did not cause any issues during the cognitive testing. Response options were changed from mark all that apply to a forced choice of yes or no. The question was modified to encourage respondents to think about the items individually when answering each question.

Question Q30 Revision 1 Findings:

The respondents did not have any difficulty understanding the modified version of question Q30.

NCVS SVS Incident Question Q31

Original Question Q31: Round 1 – Round 5 and Final Recommendation (no changes made)

Q31. Are the unwanted contacts or behaviors still going on?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

NCVS SVS Incident Question Q32

Original Question Q32: Round 1 – Round 5 and Final Recommendation (no changes made)

Q32. Why do you think the unwanted contacts or behaviors stopped? Anything else?

[Mark all that apply.]

Respondent took measures

- Got a restraining, protection, or no-contact order
- Moved
- Changed phone number, e-mail account, or social media account
- Got a new phone or computer
- Talked to the offender
- Got married or started a new relationship with someone else

Offender stopped (because he/she...)

- Was arrested
- Was incarcerated
- Started a new relationship with someone else
- Moved

- Died
- Got help/counseling

Others intervened

- Police intervened
- Friend or relative intervened
- Employer intervened
- School official, faculty, or staff intervened
- Clergy or faith leader intervened
- Others – Specify _____

Other reason

- Don't know why it stopped
- Other – Specify _____

6.4.10 Cost to Victim

NCVS SVS Incident Question Q33

Original Question Q33: Round 1 – Round 5 and Final Recommendation (no changes made)

These unwanted contacts or behaviors may affect people in different ways. Next I would like to ask you some questions about how these unwanted contacts or behaviors may have affected you.

Q33. Did experiencing these unwanted contacts or behaviors lead you to have significant problems with your job or schoolwork, or trouble with your boss, coworkers, or peers?

- Yes
- No
- N/A, does not attend school or does not have a job

NCVS SVS Incident Question Q34

Original Question Q34: Round 1 – Round 5 and Final Recommendation (no changes made)

Q34. Did experiencing these unwanted contacts or behaviors lead you to have significant problems with family members or friends, including getting into more arguments or fights than you did before, not feeling you could trust them as much, or not feeling as close to them as you did before?

- Yes
- No

NCVS SVS Incident Question Q35

Original Question Q35: Round 1 – Round 5 and Final Recommendation (no changes made)

Q35. How distressing were these unwanted contacts or behaviors to you? Were they not at all distressing, mildly distressing, moderately distressing, or severely distressing?

- Not at all distressing
- Mildly distressing
- Moderately distressing
- Severely distressing

NCVS SVS Incident Question Q36a

Original Question Q36a: Round 1 – Round 3

Q36a. Considering all of these unwanted contacts or behaviors that have occurred over the past year, did you feel... [Mark all that apply.]

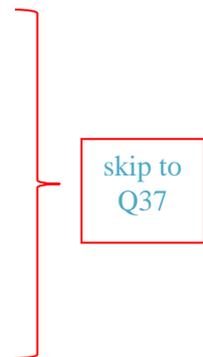
- Fearful or terrified?**
- Worried or anxious?**
- Angry or annoyed?**
- Sad or depressed?**
- Vulnerable or helpless?**
- Like you couldn't trust people?**
- Sick?**
- Stressed?**
- Unsafe?**
- Suicidal?**
- Or did you feel some other way?** [ask Q36b]

Question Q36a Revision 1: Round 4 – Round 5 and Final

Q36a. Considering all of these unwanted contacts or behaviors that have occurred over the past year, did you feel... [~~Mark all that apply.~~]

- | | |
|--|------------|
| Fearful or terrified? | • Yes • No |
| Worried or anxious? | • Yes • No |
| Angry or annoyed? | • Yes • No |
| Sad or depressed? | • Yes • No |
| Vulnerable or helpless? | • Yes • No |
| Like you couldn't trust people? | • Yes • No |
| Sick? | • Yes • No |
| Stressed? | • Yes • No |
| Unsafe? | • Yes • No |
| Suicidal? | • Yes • No |
| Or did you feel some other way? | • Yes • No |

[If yes, ask Q36b]



Original Question Q36a Findings:

The original wording for question Q36a did not cause any substantial issues during the cognitive testing. Response options were changed from mark all that apply to a forced choice of yes or no. This question was modified to encourage respondents to think about the items individually when answering each question. Some respondents suggested that certain conjoined items should be separated, such as sad or depressed, and worried or anxious because they consider them different emotions.

Question Q36a Revision 1 Findings:

Respondents reported no issues with the modifications to the response items. One respondent (AV17) did specify upon answering that while they did experience vulnerability, they did not feel helpless, differentiating the two emotions from one another.

NCVS SVS Incident Question Q36b

Original Question Q36: Round 1 – Round 5 and Final Recommendation (no changes made)

Q36b. What other way did these unwanted contacts or behaviors make you feel?
Specify _____

NCVS SVS Incident Question Q37

Original Question Q37: Round 1 – Round 3

Q37. What were you most afraid of happening as these unwanted contacts or behaviors were occurring? Were you most afraid of... [Mark all that apply.]

- Death?
- Physical or bodily harm?
- Harm or kidnap your child?
- Harm current partner/boyfriend/girlfriend?
- Harm other family members?
- Loss of job/job opportunities?
- Loss of freedom?
- Loss of social network, peers, or friends?
- Behavior would never stop?
- General fear of not knowing what might happen next?
- Losing your mind?
- Anything else – specify _____
- Don't know

Question Q37 Revision 1: Round 4 – Round 5 and Final Recommendation

Q37. What were most you afraid of happening as these unwanted contacts or behaviors were occurring? Were you most afraid of... [Mark all that apply.]

- | | |
|---|-------------------|
| Being killed? | • Yes • No |
| Physical or bodily harm? | • Yes • No |
| Someone close to you being harmed? | • Yes • No |
| Losing your job or job opportunities? | • Yes • No |
| Losing your freedom? | • Yes • No |
| Losing your social network, peers, or friends? | • Yes • No |
| The behaviors never stopping? | • Yes • No |
| Not knowing what might happen next? | • Yes • No |

Losing your mind?

• Yes • No

Anything else – specify _____

• Yes • No

Don't know

Original Question Q37 Findings:

There were no comprehension issues with the original wording for question Q37 during the cognitive testing. Some respondents were confused, and waited for a list of options to choose from. This question was changed from mark all that apply to a forced choice of yes or no. Additionally, the word "most" was removed to capture the various situations the respondent may have been afraid of potentially happening.

Question Q37 Revision 1 Findings:

After converting the question to a forced yes/no, respondents did not have any difficulty with the modified version of question Q37.

NCVS SVS Incident Question Q38

Original Question Q38: Round 1 – Round 5 and Final Recommendation (no changes made)

Q38. During the past 12 months, have you been fired from or asked to leave a job because of these unwanted contacts or behaviors?

- Yes
- No
- N/A, does not have a job

NCVS SVS Incident Question Q39

Original Question Q39: Round 1 – Round 5 and Final Recommendation (no changes made)

Q39. During the past 12 months, did you lose any pay that was not covered by unemployment insurance, paid leave, or some other source because of these unwanted contacts or behaviors?

- Yes
- No
- N/A, does not have a job

NCVS SVS Incident Question Q40

Original Question Q40: Round 1 – Round 5 and Final Recommendation (no changes made)

Q40. During the past 12 months, have you been suspended or expelled from school because of these unwanted contacts or behaviors?

- Yes
- No
- N/A, does not attend school

NCVS SVS Incident Question Q41

Original Question Q41: Round 1 – Round 3

Q41. Did you lose any time from work or school because of these unwanted contacts or behaviors for such things as – [Mark all that apply.]

- Fear or concern for your safety?**
- Police-related activities?**
- Court-related activities (i.e. getting a restraining/protection order or testifying)?**
- Changing your phone number or personal information?**
- Moving?**
- Fixing or replacing damaged property?**
- Anything else – specify _____**
- None (did not lose time from work or school for any of these reasons)
- N/A, does not attend school AND does not have a job

Question Q41 Revision 1: Round 4 - Round 5 and Final Recommendation

Q41. Did you lose any time from work or school because of these unwanted contacts or behaviors for such things as – ~~[Mark all that apply.]~~

Fear or concern for your safety?

- Yes • No

Police-related activities?

- Yes • No

Court-related activities (i.e. getting a restraining/protection order or testifying)?

- Yes • No

Changing your phone number or personal information?

- Yes • No

Moving?

- Yes • No

Fixing or replacing damaged property?

- Yes • No

Anything else

- Yes • No – Specify _____

N/A, does not attend school AND does not have a job

Original Question Q41 Findings:

The original wording for question Q41 did not cause any substantial issues during the cognitive testing. Response options were changed from mark all that apply to a forced choice of yes or no. This question was modified to encourage respondents to think about the items individually when answering each question. A couple of respondents mentioned that they would consider police-related activities and court-related activities as the same things and thought of going to court when asked about a police-related activity.

Question Q41 Revision 1 Findings:

Respondents reported no issues with the modifications to the response items. However, when probed about police-related activities, they mentioned providing testimony as an example of a police-related activity.

7 CONCLUSIONS

Taken as a whole, the findings from this study indicate that the original questions for the NCVS SVS were a strong start. A majority of the questions performed well and required no revisions. Of those questions that required revisions, most were minor tweaks. Only three of the original questions were truly problematic, SQ7 (related behaviors), Q13 (the nature of the group of offenders), and Q15 (frequency of stalking).

Question SQ7 was the most problematic question, and was difficult to fix. At least some respondents had trouble understanding and answering every version of the question. Because question SQ7 is so important in deciding who is screened into and out of the survey, any possible source of respondent confusion is problematic. Ultimately, the decision was made to remove question SQ7 to avoid incorrectly screening victims of stalking out of the survey. For Q13, the original question was lengthy and difficult to read fluently. Though the wording was revised, the concepts measured in the question worked well and were retained in the new version. For Q15, the question wording worked well, but the open ended format made it difficult to code the victims' responses as a single number.

A major change that occurred was converting ten questions in the Incident Questions section from a mark-all format to a forced choice yes/no format. The original versions of these questions were not problematic; the questions worked well to measure the concepts of interest. The changes were made because research shows that the forced choice format performs better than the mark-all format with certain types of questions (Smyth et. Al. 2006).

While the screener questions for the main NCVS questionnaire were not part of our focus in this study, we identified some issues with the questions, indicating that they could benefit from additional cognitive testing.

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