Appendix A
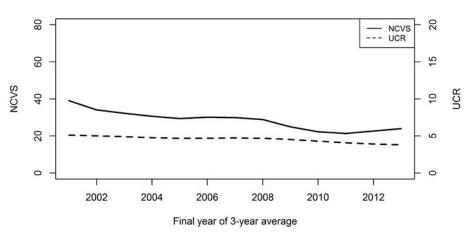
Treatment of Year 2006 and Series Crimes

As noted in the introduction, this appendix covers two features of the estimates. The first feature is a special treatment of NCVS estimates for 2006. With the change to a new sample design in 2006, the national NCVS estimates increased in 2006 compared to 2005, only to return to approximately the 2005 level in 2007. In 2006, many new interviewers were introduced as part of the overall redesign, providing a possible explanation for the anomaly. After 2006, publications in BJS's Criminal Victimization series, including Criminal Victimization, 2013, call attention to the unusual 2006 NCVS results. Displaying 3-year averages partially smooths the anomaly, but it still distorts the general crime trends (figure A-1 (a)).

A preliminary SAE model for 1997–2011 was developed using all NCVS data for those years. Estimates from this model appear in figures 2-5 and 2-6 as well as tables 2-2 and 2-3.
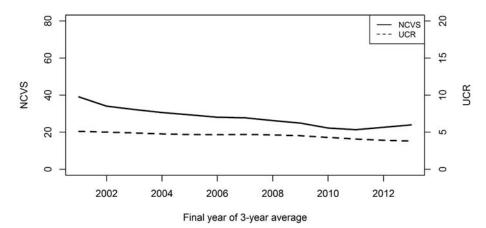
A revised model was developed that excluded the 2006 data. This approach replaced the 3-year average for 2004–2006 with the average of 2004 and 2005; replaced the average for 2005–2007 with the average of 2005 and 2007; and replaced the average for 2006–2008 with the average of 2007 and 2008. Where NCVS (SAE) estimates are compared with UCR estimates, this redefinition of the 3-year averages is applied to both the NCVS and the UCR. The 2006 data were similarly excluded from the 1999–2013 model that produced most of the state results in this report. Similarly, 2006 was also excluded from the county and CBSA models. Figure A-1 compares national estimates of violent crime from the NCVS to the UCR, both for the original approach that included 2006 and the revised approach that omitted it. The effect of the 2006 NCVS data, producing a bump in the NCVS series, is evident in the upper graph (figure A-1 (a)). Both graphs show the substantial drop in the NCVS crime rate from 1999 to 2013, and a smaller relative drop in the UCR.

The second feature is to note the treatment of series crimes. With the release of the 2011 NCVS estimates, BJS introduced a new method for weighting series crimes, that is, crimes where the respondent could not distinctly recall separate incidents of the same type of crime but could usually provide a specific number or an estimate of the number of times the crime occurred. The new method uses the reported number of times the crime occurred, capping the number at 10 and using 6 when the respondent could not provide a specific number (Lauritsen et al., 2012). The SAE estimates described here implement this approach to weighting series crimes for all years. The NCVS Victimization Analysis Tool (http://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=nvat) also uses this approach for all estimates it provides, both for years before and after 2011, as does the most recent BJS publications.

Figure A-1   NCVS vs. UCR violent crime rate, both (a) with and (b) without data for year 2006

(a) NCVS vs. UCR violent crime rates including 2006 data

(b) NCVS vs. UCR violent crime rates omitting 2006 data