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TECHNICAL REPORT

The National Computer Security Survey (NCSS) Final Methodology

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Prepared for the Bureau of Justice Statistics



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Summary

The Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) in the Office of Justice Programs (OJP) of the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) conducted a pilot survey in 2001—the Computer Security Survey (CSS) pilot test—to collect information about computer infrastructure and security measures from businesses across a range of economic sectors, including finance, utilities, transportation, health care, telecommunications, petroleum mining and manufacturing, chemical and drug manufacturing, and Internet-service providers (ISPs).

Based on the pilot-survey results, BJS/DOJ, along with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), decided to field a National Computer Security Survey (NCSS), a nationally representative sample of businesses across 36 industry sectors. The survey collected data on the nature, extent, and consequences of computer-security incidents. The goal was to produce reliable national estimates of the incidence and prevalence of computer-security incidents (including denial-of-service attacks and other incidents with serious consequences, such as fraud, embezzlement, theft of intellectual property [IP], electronic vandalism, or sabotage) against businesses, as well as businesses' resulting losses from such incidents. In 2004, RAND was selected to field the national survey. The survey itself was fielded in 2006; however, the data collected represent the experiences of companies in 2005.

This technical report details the methodology used to develop and field the NCSS as well as the sampling design and weighting methodology. The official survey results for the NCSS will be presented in a BJS report to be published in 2008. The NCSS is the first nationally representative survey on cyber security within the United States. More specifically, the survey was designed to collect data about the prevalence of different types of computer-security incidents and the monetary costs imposed by these incidents, across all industry sectors and especially for those that comprise the U.S. critical infrastructure. In addition, the NCSS provides information about what computer-security measures are currently in place, the reporting of computer-security incidents, and whom companies identify as being the perpetrators of such incidents.