

The primary function of the Deaths in Custody Reporting Program (DCRP) is to collect data on inmate deaths occurring in the custody of local jails and state prisons. The DCRP is also responsible for collecting annual data on inmate custodial deaths for both types of agencies, plus population statistics of all adult population jails in the United States. The DCRP began in 2000 and required mandatory reporting until its authoring legislation expired in 2006; participation became voluntary beginning in 2007 through 2014. Historically, DCRP has allowed respondents to submit data across multiple modes: Web, paper, FAX, bulk data files, or by telephone. Methodological enhancements on the DCRP have included tailored mailing envelopes and alternate mailing methods (Ellis, Chris, et al. "A Comparison of Establishment Collection Mailing Methods"), pushing the Web option including withholding paper forms from the initial survey invitation (Ellis, Chris, et al. "The Effects of Pushing Web in a Mixed-mode Establishment Data Collection"), which has remained in hardcopy form with multiple enclosures. For the 2015 DCRP, we designed and implemented a methodological experiment to test the effects of sending the initial survey invitation via e-mail, with reference to Web-based electronic versions of the DCRP mailing's typical enclosures (i.e., "paperless"). We will present the results of this important test of increased use of technology in a time-series collection which has been very strategic in the area of implementing methodological changes. Results will include an assessment of the e-mail invitation's impact on cost, unit response rate, time/speed of response, and mode of response.