

WORKER REPRESENTATION AND PARTICIPATION SURVEY

WAVE ONE STRUCTURE AND METHODOLOGY*

Wave 1 survey results were based on telephone interviews with a nationally representative sample of 2,408 adults, 18 years of age and older, currently working in private companies or non-profit organizations in the continental United States with 25 or more employees (excluding company owners and their families and upper management). The sample was split in two ("Form A" and "Form B")The interviews were conducted from September 15, 1994 through October 13, 1994.

Sample Design & Response Rate

The sample for this survey was a random digit sample of telephone numbers selected from telephone exchanges in the continental United States. The sample of telephone numbers was designed to produce a representative sample of continental U.S. telephone households; the random digit sampling assures representation of unlisted or not-yet-listed numbers, and is thus superior to random selection from a frame of listed telephone households. Attempts were made to contact each of the sampled households, and potential respondents were then identified and screened to determine their eligibility for the survey.

At least five attempts were made to complete an interview at every sampled telephone number. The calls were staggered over times of day and days of the week to maximize the chances of making a contact with a potential respondent. All interview breakoffs and refusals were re-contacted at least once in order to attempt to convert them to completed interviews.

If contact was made, the respondent was asked several screening questions to determine eligibility. Quotas for completed screening interviews were set by gender and region to match U.S. Census Bureau parameters of the distribution of workers. To be eligible, a respondent had to be currently employed at a private company or non-profit organization with 25 or more employees and not an owner of the company or part of upper management. Respondents meeting these criteria continued with the full interview.

Interviewers conducted the screening interview with a potential respondent at 58 percent of the sampled residential telephone numbers. In this calculation, we exclude from the base (denominator) of "residential telephone numbers" those numbers determined to be inoperative, business, or dedicated to FAX lines, and three-quarters of the numbers that consistently rang with no answer (according to informal estimates from AT&T, only a quarter of such numbers are actually assigned to a residence).

Twenty percent of respondents submitting to the screening procedure were determined to be eligible for interviewing, and 88 percent of the respondents who were determined to be eligible went on to complete the entire interview.

Note that owners and upper-level managers are included in demographic weighting for comparability with the Census parameters. These respondents were only asked the screening questions and the demographic questions at the end of the interview. They were not asked the full questionnaire and are not reported on in the body of this report.

Weighting

Non-response in telephone interview surveys produces some known biases in survey-derived estimates because participation tends to vary for different subgroups of the population, and these subgroups are likely to vary also on questions of substantive interest. For example, men are more difficult than women to reach at home by telephone, and people with relatively low educational attainment are less likely than others to agree to participate in telephone surveys. In order to compensate for these known biases, the sample data are weighted in analysis.

The demographic weighting parameters are derived from a special analysis of the most recently available Census Bureau Annual Demographic File (the March 1993 Current Population Survey). This analysis produced population parameters for the demographic characteristics of workers aged 18 or older living in telephone households in the continental United States and working in private companies or non-profit organizations with at least twenty-five employees¹. These parameters were compared with the sample characteristics to construct sample weights.

The data for this survey were weighted to bring the demographic characteristics of the sample into alignment with the population parameters on age within gender, education within gender, education within age, race, marital status, presence of children under 18 in the household, and region. The data were weighted separately by questionnaire form, since different versions of questions were asked of random subsets of respondents.

The weights were derived using an iterative technique that simultaneously balances the distributions of all weighting parameters. After an optimum sample balancing solution was reached, the weights were constrained to fall within the range of 1 to 5. This constraint is useful to ensure that individual respondents do not exert an inordinate effect on the survey's overall results.

Multiple Forms

The sample was divided in half, with one administered "Form A" of the questionnaire and the other "Form B." In some cases, we then split the sample again, e.g., asking a question worded one way to the first half of both forms, and worded another to the second half. Throughout, full use was made of computer assisted interviewing, with all sorts of "skips" (moving to different questions depending on the answer to a preceding one), and probes built in for different constituencies.

*Excerpt from What Workers Want, Freeman, Richard B. and Joel Rogers, Cornell Press, spring 1999 (forthcoming).

