

Omaha Conditions Survey: 2004

Survey Methodology

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The Omaha Conditions Survey: 2004 was conducted through telephone interviews with adults from a random sample of Omaha-area households. The sample was drawn from households in the Nebraska portion of the Omaha Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). Douglas, Sarpy, Cass, Washington, and Saunders Counties comprise the Nebraska portion of the Omaha MSA.

Telephone numbers were selected for the sample using a random digit dialing design. This design allows for the inclusion of both listed and unlisted telephone numbers in the sample.

Respondent Interviews

Professional interviewers from The MSR Group conducted the interviews between April 8 and April 27, 2004.

After making contact with someone at a selected telephone number, interviewers asked to speak with the person who was 19 years old or older and had the next birthday in the household. Interviewers asked for the adult with the next birthday to avoid biasing the sample in favor of persons more likely to be at home or answer the phone. Interviewers made at least two callbacks if the correct household member was not available.

Respondents were promised that their responses would remain confidential. In addition, any respondents concerned about the legitimacy of the survey were given the telephone number of the survey's lead agency, the Center for Public Affairs Research (CPAR) at the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

Spanish-speaking interviewers were available to complete interviews if necessary. Surveys were conducted using computer-assisted telephone interviewing. The MSR Group provided CPAR with separate data files of closed-question and open-ended responses. Data cleaning, coding, and analysis were completed by CPAR.

Error and Confidence Levels

As with all sample surveys, the Omaha Conditions Survey results are assumed to contain some degree of error. The reliability of survey results depends upon the degree of care exercised during survey administration, the sample size, the extent to which the sampling frame corresponds to the population, and the amount of nonresponse.

Survey Administration

Errors can creep into data in a number of ways during survey administration. For example, respondents may misunderstand questions, or interviewers may misunderstand or

misrecord answers. The extent of such errors cannot be estimated. Researchers made every effort to minimize the potential for these types of errors throughout the survey process, and their effect on the results of the Omaha Conditions Survey is likely very small.

Sample Size

Another source of error stems from using a sample of persons to estimate the characteristics of a specific, larger population. Stated as a question, how large a difference is there likely to be between the results of the sample survey and the results one would obtain from interviewing the entire population? This difference, or sampling error, can be estimated for a random sample using accepted statistical techniques.

The 2000 Census indicated that the five-county Nebraska portion of the Omaha MSA had 461,799 persons ages 19 and older. The sample consisted of 806 respondents. The sample has a maximum sampling error of plus or minus 3.5 percent at the 95 percent level of confidence. In other words, there is a 95 percent likelihood that the true value of an item is no more than 3.5 percentage points higher or lower than the value reported.

This estimate of sampling error assumes a random sample—that is, all members of the population under study had a known, equal chance of being included in the sample. However, telephone surveys can violate the basic assumption of randomness because the sampling frame does not correspond perfectly to the population and due to nonresponse.

Sampling Frame

The sampling frame is the list of units from which the sample is drawn. Ideally, the sampling frame consists of all members of the population under study. In practice such a list is rarely available, so a list that approximates the ideal is used. This is the case with the Omaha Conditions Survey where the population under study is adults in the Omaha area and the sampling frame is a list of telephone numbers. As a consequence, not all Omaha area adults had a known, equal chance of being included in the sample. Instead, a person's probability of being included in the sample varied depending on how many telephone numbers served the residence and how many adults lived in the household.

Persons living in households without telephones had no chance of inclusion in the survey sample. The exclusion of persons without telephones can result in the under representation of certain groups, such as those with lower incomes, less education, minorities, and more mobile persons within the area. Conversely, persons living in households with multiple telephone numbers had a greater chance of inclusion than persons living in households with one telephone number.

A person's probability of being interviewed also varied according to the number of adults in the household. For example, a household with one adult living alone would be interviewed with certainty when the phone number was selected. Each person in a household with two adults had a one in two chance of being interviewed upon having their phone number selected and each person in a household with three adults had a one in three chance and so on.

Nonresponse

Survey nonresponse is the failure to obtain measurements on those selected for sampling. This occurs when an eligible individual is unable or unwilling to complete the interview or to answer specific questions. This type of error is probably the most difficult to work with since the characteristics of the nonrespondents are typically unknown. Researchers took reasonable steps

throughout the survey process to minimize nonresponse. For example, up to three callbacks were utilized to complete the interview with the appropriate individual at each selected phone number.

Respondent Characteristics

An inherent goal when utilizing sampling is to have a representative sample of the overall population. As mentioned above, the exclusion of households without telephones, the overrepresentation of households with multiple telephones, and nonresponse all affect how representative the sample is and overall survey results.

Table 1 compares sex, age, race, and income characteristics of the survey sample to those in the same geographic area as reported by the 2000 Census. The percentage of respondents in the survey sample is similar to that of the 2000 Census for sex and race. For household income, the sample appears slightly underrepresented in the lower income categories and overrepresented in the higher income categories. Part of the reason for this may be that low-income households are less likely to have telephones and thus were unable to be surveyed. Another reason may be that the Census reports income in 1999 and the Omaha Conditions Survey reflects respondents' views of incomes for 2003 or 2004; one would expect the percentages in the higher income categories to increase due to inflation and wage increases over time.

Regarding age, younger persons were underrepresented in the sample while older persons were overrepresented. Those under 35 represented 23.1 percent of the sample versus being 32.8 percent of the population. In contrast, 44.5 percent of the sample consisted of those over 50 while this age category comprised 34.0 percent of the population. Thus, the percentages of those under 35 and over 50 differed by approximately 10 percent from the population of the Omaha area. The sample was representative for the age category of 35 to 49 years.

The overrepresentation of people over 50 years old likely stemmed from increased phone accessibility to this portion of the population. These older individuals were more likely to be home and have available time to complete the survey when interviewers called as they are more often retired and have fewer time constraints, such as needing to care for young children. Those under 35 are less likely to be at home given work schedules and other activities outside the home (dating, entertainment, sports participation, etc.). These factors led, in part, to the survey's specific age distribution of respondents.

Weights

The data were weighted for analysis. The purpose of weighting is to adjust the data for the over or underrepresentation of certain groups. The previous section detailed how the sample compared to the overall population for the Nebraska portion of the Omaha area. Differences were noted regarding income and age.

Weights were not used to account for differences in income levels. Although the lack of a household phone likely excluded some lower income households from the survey, this factor did not likely have a large effect on survey respondents. The 2000 Census showed that only 1.5 percent of occupied housing units in the five-county area did not have telephone service. In addition, the assumed overrepresentation of higher income households might be somewhat muted by the comparison of 1999 incomes from the Census versus respondents stating current 2003 or 2004 incomes in the survey. Income increases/inflation during this interim would be

expected. Thus, weighting based on income would potentially change figures away from what they truly are in current reality.

Figures were weighted to account for differences in age. To more accurately calculate weights, both age and gender were analyzed. This allowed a distinction to be made between males and females of the same age group and have a separate weight assigned for each. Table 2 shows the number and percent of respondents by sex and age for the 2004 survey versus the 2000 Census. The data shows that women under 35 and over 50 were more greatly underrepresented and overrepresented respectively. Thus, weights were assigned based upon the measure needed to make the sample more representative of the entire population. Utilizing weights improved the ability to draw conclusions on the opinions and viewpoints of Omaha-area residents as a whole.

Comparability with Prior Omaha Conditions Surveys

Differences in geographic coverage and seasonality affect comparisons of the 2004 Omaha Conditions Survey results with those from prior years.

The 2004 survey includes Saunders County while earlier surveys do not. This reflects the addition of Saunders County to the Omaha Metropolitan Statistical Area in December 2003.

The Omaha Conditions Survey: 2004 was conducted during the spring; the 1994 survey was conducted in the fall. The season during which the survey is conducted may affect responses to some items such as opinions on schools and roads. Of note, the 2004 survey was conducted after the Omaha area received record levels of snowfall during the winter of 2003.

Readers should consider these differences when making comparisons of Omaha Conditions Survey results over time.

Table 1: Comparison of 2004 Sample with 2000 Census Data for the Five-County Nebraska Portion of the Omaha Metropolitan Area for Select Characteristics

	2004 Survey Sample		2000 Census	
	Number*	Percent	Number	Percent
A. Total Persons 19 Years and Older	806	100.0	461,799	100.0
B. Persons 19 Years and Older by Sex:				
Male	397	49.3	223,170	48.3
Female	409	50.7	238,629	51.7
C. Persons 19 Years and Older by Age:				
19-24	50	6.3	54,546	11.8
25-34	133	16.8	97,099	21.0
35-49	256	32.4	153,061	33.1
50-64	184	23.3	89,707	19.4
65 and over	168	21.2	67,386	14.6
D. Persons 19 Years and Older by Race and Hispanic Origin				
White, non-Hispanic	705	88.9	388,954	84.2
Black, non-Hispanic	35	4.4	36,536	7.9
American Indian, non-Hispanic	8	1.0	1,965	0.4
Asian, non-Hispanic	7	0.9	7,978	1.7
Other, non-Hispanic	5	0.6	4,094	0.9
Hispanic	33	4.2	22,272	4.8
E. Total Households	806	100.0	249,654	100.0
F. Households by Household Income:				
Under \$10,000	16	2.2	17,004	6.8
\$10,000 - \$19,999	53	7.4	26,854	10.8
\$20,000 - \$29,999	78	10.9	32,611	13.1
\$30,000 - \$39,999	73	10.2	31,674	12.7
\$40,000 - \$49,999	90	12.6	28,049	11.2
\$50,000 - \$59,999	85	11.9	25,496	10.2
\$60,000 or more	318	44.6	87,966	35.2

* Unweighted counts; Sample numbers may not sum to totals due to missing data.

Table 2: Comparison of Sex and Age of 2004 Sample with 2000 Census Data for the Five-County Nebraska Portion of the Omaha Metropolitan Area

	Survey Sample, 2004		2000 Census	
	Number*	Percent	Number	Percent
Total Persons 19 Years and Older	806	100.0	461,799	100.0
Males by Age:				
19-24	29	3.7	27,249	5.9
25-34	71	9.0	48,855	10.6
35-49	141	17.8	75,734	16.4
50-64	80	10.1	43,902	9.5
65 and over	67	8.5	27,430	5.9
Females by Age:				
19-24	21	2.7	27,297	5.9
25-34	62	7.8	48,244	10.4
35-49	115	14.5	77,327	16.7
50-64	104	13.1	45,805	9.9
65 and over	101	12.8	39,956	8.7

* Unweighted counts; Sample numbers may not sum to totals due to missing data.