



LABOR CONDITIONS

2006

Omaha Labor Conditions Survey Omaha Metro Sample

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The survey identified workforce participation, unemployment, underemployment, multiple job holders, primary occupations and employee benefits as well as a variety of other household and job-related information.

The Center for Public Affairs Research at the University of Nebraska at Omaha organized a telephone survey of Omaha-area residents to ascertain characteristics of the metro area's workforce. The survey identified workforce participation, unemployment, underemployment, multiple job holders, primary occupations and employee benefits as well as a variety of other household and job-related information.

Surveying area residents provides invaluable information regarding their employment situation and work-related activities. Having this type of information is critical in forming a profile of an area's workforce including their education and training, demographic factors such as age, and their self-employment or full or part-time work status. Without surveying residents, items such as the productive capacity and availability of the workforce to increase employment activity or reduce underemployment would be largely unknown.

While surveys have limitations such as question nonresponse and budgetary time constraints, they do provide a representative profile of the views and activity within an area as a whole. The 2006 Omaha Labor Conditions Survey identified several key workforce characteristics and descriptive factors associated with employment. These items are highlighted in this report.

It is important to note that the Omaha metro area was defined as those counties in the Combined Statistical Area (CSA), which includes Cass, Dodge, Douglas, Sarpy, Saunders and Washington counties in Nebraska and Harrison, Mills and Pottawattamie counties in Iowa. Only residents of these counties were interviewed based upon random digit dialing within corresponding telephone prefixes.

The interviews primarily occurred between August 11 and September 8, 2006, with 942 total interviews being completed. The structure of the interview inquired about a maximum of four persons age 16 or older living in the household; thus relevant employment information was obtained on 1,841 persons age 16 and older¹.



¹At the 95 percent level of confidence, the survey's margin of error equated to 3.2 percent based on the number of households interviewed and 2.3 percent regarding persons age 16 and older on which relevant employment information was obtained.

Characteristics of the Labor Force

- Nearly three out of four Omaha area residents age 16 and older (74.0 percent) are participating in the labor force, either working or looking for work. This is approximately 8 percentage points higher than the national average².
- The overall unemployment rate, as measured by the survey, was 3.9 percent. Based on the nine-county 2005 population estimate of 656,240 persons age 16 or older³, this represents approximately 19,100 persons.
- The unemployment rate was substantially higher among persons age 16 to 24 (9.2 percent) versus being around 3.0 percent in other major age categories of workers (25 to 34, 35 to 49, 50 to 64). The unemployment rate was higher among African Americans (7.8 percent) and Hispanics (4.2 percent), but these figures were not significantly higher from a statistical perspective than those of non-Hispanic Whites (3.6 percent). Unemployment rates were significantly lower statistically for those having a bachelor's degree or more education (0.9 percent).
- 6.1 percent of employed persons worked only part time and wanted to work at least five additional hours per week. This form of underemployment (in terms of hours) affects an estimated 28,323 persons age 16 or older in the Omaha metro area. Females, those age 16 to 24, African Americans and those without a high school diploma expressed higher underemployment with regard to hours.
- More than one in five employed persons (20.4 percent) indicated settling for a job that he or she was overqualified for because nothing better was available. This form of underemployment (in terms of job quality) affects an estimated 95,300 persons.
- Overall, 23.8 percent of the employed (about 111,000 persons) indicated being underemployed in terms of either hours or job quality. The rate of underemployment was higher among those age 16 to 24 (35.9 percent), African Americans (40.0 percent) and those without a high school diploma (35.2 percent).

²Source: Current Population Survey, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Civilian Labor Force Participation Rate, seasonally adjusted, August 2006.

³Source: 2005 Population Estimates Program, U.S. Census Bureau, released August 4, 2006



Photo by Timothy Keen

23.8 percent of employed workers report being underemployed – about 111,000 people.



Photo by Timothy Keen

*23 percent of the
employed work part time
– about 107,400 people.*

Characteristics of the Employed

- Just less than one in ten employed persons (9.6 percent) held more than one job. Likewise, 9.9 percent of workers were self employed. The percentage of self-employed persons is higher among older age categories.
- Of those employed, 23.0 percent worked part time, or less than 35 hours per week. This represents about 107,400 persons. Women, those age 16 to 24 and 65 or over, and those without a high school diploma, tended to work part time more often.
- Nearly four in ten employed persons had a bachelor's degree (26.2 percent) or an advanced degree (13.0 percent). On the opposite end of the education spectrum, more than three in ten employed persons had only a high school diploma (22.1 percent) or had not finished high school (10.2 percent). It is important to note that those aged 16 to 24 comprised 16.2 percent of the overall workforce and many in this age category are enrolled in school so higher levels of education will likely be obtained as time passes.
- The poverty rate was only 1.8 percent among the employed, versus being over 20 percent for unemployed persons.

Characteristics of the Underemployed

- Underemployed persons tended to have been with their current employer for a shorter time than other employed persons. Approximately 45 percent of the underemployed had been with their current employer for two years or less compared to about 28 percent having this length of service among other employed persons.
- Those aged 16 to 24 comprised 23.9 percent of the underemployed compared to 13.5 percent of other employed persons.
- The poverty rate among underemployed persons (4.6 percent) was more than 6.5 times higher than the poverty rate among other employed persons (0.7 percent).
- Underemployed persons reported fewer benefits (retirement plan, health insurance, paid vacation, etc.) were offered by their employer

when compared to other employed persons. In addition, the percentage of underemployed persons having a household income of less than \$50,000 (30.8 percent) was about twice as high as among other employed persons (16.2 percent).

- For persons underemployed in terms of job quality, the most frequently mentioned obstacle to getting a better job was a lack of jobs or opportunities to advance as well as competition for existing jobs, mentioned by 25.4 percent of the underemployed. The respondent's education, training or skills followed as a distant second, mentioned by 11.9 percent. Nearly 10 percent didn't know or mention a specific obstacle while 7.8 percent said they couldn't find the "right" job for their qualifications or one that adequately used their skills.



Photo by Eric Francis

Characteristics of the Unemployed

- Unemployment is largely prevalent among the young. Nearly four in 10 unemployed persons (39.0 percent) identified in the survey were age 16 to 24.
- Many unemployed persons have had some schooling beyond high school (47.0 percent). Thirty percent of the unemployed had a high school diploma only and the remaining 23 percent had not completed high school. Many of this latter group are young people still of high school age.
- More than 65 percent of unemployed workers were employed within the previous 12 months.

25.4 percent of the underemployed, by quality of job, report lack of jobs or opportunities to advance as a reason for their underemployment.

TABLE 1.

Labor Force Status, Participation Rate, and Unemployment Rate, Omaha CSA

	Number	Percent of Employed
Persons 16 years and older	656,240	n/a
In Labor Force	485,862	n/a
Employed	466,753	100.0
Underemployed (hours)	28,323	6.1
Underemployed (quality)	95,339	20.4
Underemployed (either hours or quality)	111,068	23.8
Employed, not underemployed	355,686	76.2
Unemployed	19,109	n/a
Not in Labor Force	170,378	n/a
Labor Force Participation Rate (percent)	74.0	
Unemployment Rate (percent)	3.9	

Source: Omaha Labor Conditions Survey: 2006

Number of persons based on estimated population age 16 and older from the U.S. Census Bureau (2005).



Photo by Timothy Keen

TABLE 2.

Rates of Labor Force Participation, Unemployment and Underemployment by Selected Population Characteristics and Area, Omaha CSA

All figures are percentages	Labor Force Participation	Unemployment	Underemployment		
			(hours)	(quality)	(either hours or quality)
All persons	74.0	3.9	6.1	20.4	23.8
Sex					
Male	80.9	3.9	4.4	20.5	22.6
Female	67.6	3.9	7.9	20.3	25.2
Age					
16 to 24	77.5	9.2	22.7	23.3	35.9
25 to 34	86.7	3.2	2.3	20.3	21.5
35 to 49	88.9	2.9	3.5	21.1	23.1
50 to 64	78.3	3.3	2.3	19.2	19.7
65 and over	16.4	0.0	4.1	17.1	21.1
Race					
Hispanic	70.3	4.2	2.7	17.7	18.4
White, not Hispanic	74.7	3.6	5.2	19.6	22.4
African-American	64.3	7.8	16.0	33.9	40.0
Other	83.1	5.5	15.8	28.2	41.8
Education					
Less than high school	59.6	8.5	21.8	20.0	35.2
High school or GED	64.3	5.3	6.2	19.1	21.4
Some college, but no degree	76.1	4.7	7.2	24.2	28.3
Associate degree	83.9	6.5	3.4	25.1	27.3
Bachelor's degree	81.6	1.1	2.7	21.6	22.3
Advanced degree	88.3	0.5	1.5	12.2	13.3
Area					
North Omaha	67.5	10.6	10.9	29.5	32.3
South Omaha	69.8	5.1	8.0	24.3	28.3
Balance of Douglas County	74.3	2.4	6.1	19.1	22.6
Sarpy County	79.3	4.1	5.6	19.3	23.3
Pottawattamie County	67.6	3.9	7.1	21.3	26.4
Dodge, Washington Counties	76.3	8.1	7.2	23.8	25.8
Cass, Saunders, Harrison, Mills Counties	76.8	3.2	0.8	18.1	18.5
Poverty Status					
Below Poverty (in poverty)	59.5	33.5	47.0	62.3	67.7
Above Poverty (not in poverty)	75.8	3.3	5.6	20.1	23.3
Below 200% of Poverty	54.3	16.4	20.5	40.9	47.8
Above 200% of Poverty	78.9	2.8	4.9	19.1	22.0

Differences across categories shown in bold are statistically significant ($p < .05$).

TABLE 3.

Characteristics of the Employed, Omaha CSA

	Number	Percent
Total persons	466,753	100.0
Holding more than one job	44,829	9.6
Holding one job only	421,925	90.4
Self-employed	46,366	9.9
Working for someone else	420,387	90.1
Years with current employer/job		
Less than 1 year	36,327	7.8
1-2 years	114,658	24.6
3-4 years	62,113	13.3
5-9 years	99,806	21.4
10 or more years	153,851	33.0
Working part-time (fewer than 35 hours per week)	107,427	23.0
Working full-time (35 or more hours per week)	359,327	77.0
Sex		
Male	246,374	52.8
Female	220,380	47.2
Age		
16 to 24	75,383	16.2
25 to 34	106,857	22.9
35 to 49	176,405	37.8
50 to 64	92,872	19.9
65 and over	15,235	3.3
Education		
Less than high school	47,527	10.2
High school graduate or GED	103,193	22.1
Some college, but no degree	91,079	19.5
Associate (2-year) degree	42,127	9.0
Bachelor's (4-year) degree	122,139	26.2
Advanced degree	60,688	13.0
Poverty Status		
Below Poverty (in poverty)	8,428	1.8
Below 200% of Poverty	39,260	8.4
Benefits Offered by Employer		
Retirement plan (401k, pension, etc.)	354,951	76.0
Health insurance plan	367,577	78.8
Dental insurance plan	320,537	68.7
Life insurance plan	330,245	70.8
On-site child care	40,546	8.7
Paid vacation	361,450	77.4
Household Income		
Under \$25,000	15,813	3.4
\$25,000 to \$49,999	77,733	16.7
\$50,000 to \$74,999	119,841	25.7
\$75,000 or more	253,367	54.3

TABLE 4.

Percentage of Multiple-job Holders, Self-employed and Part-time Workers Among the Employed by Selected Population Characteristics and Area, Omaha CSA

	Multiple-job holders (percent of employed)	Self-employed (percent of employed)	Part-time workers (percent of employed)
All persons	9.6	9.9	23.0
Sex			
Male	7.3	11.4	13.8
Female	12.2	8.3	33.2
Age			
16 to 24	9.9	3.4	60.9
25 to 34	9.5	8.4	13.6
35 to 49	10.1	8.9	14.4
50 to 64	9.2	16.1	15.1
65 and over	6.6	22.8	52.7
Race			
Hispanic	3.2	0.0	9.6
White, not Hispanic	9.9	10.5	23.6
African-American	16.2	9.9	20.4
Other	0.0	4.5	21.4
Education			
Less than high school	11.5	5.2	60.6
High school or GED	8.0	10.3	19.1
Some college, but no degree	9.0	10.3	27.0
Associate degree	8.1	9.9	13.0
Bachelor's degree	9.2	10.0	16.5
Advanced degree	13.0	12.7	16.5
Area			
North Omaha	10.6	7.4	19.5
South Omaha	11.8	7.0	24.6
Balance of Douglas County	7.5	11.3	27.4
Sarpy County	13.2	7.9	19.1
Pottawattamie County	8.8	11.3	12.8
Dodge, Washington Counties	6.4	6.5	17.0
Cass, Saunders, Harrison, Mills Counties	14.4	11.2	23.8
Poverty Status			
Below Poverty (in poverty)	0.0	3.7	62.4
Above Poverty (not in poverty)	9.9	10.1	22.2
Below 200% of Poverty	3.9	5.7	37.2
Above 200% of Poverty	10.3	10.3	21.6

Differences across categories shown in bold are statistically significant ($p < .05$).

TABLE 5.

Characteristics of the Underemployed (either hours or quality) and Other Employed, Omaha CSA

	Number		Percent	
	Underemployed	Other employed	Underemployed	Other employed
Total persons	111,068	355,686	100.0	100.0
Holding more than one job	9,883	34,106	8.9	9.6
Holding one job only	101,185	321,580	91.1	90.4
Self-employed	8,062	37,592	7.3	10.6
Working for someone else	103,006	318,094	92.7	89.4
Years with current employer				
Less than 1 year	13,664	22,747	12.3	6.4
1-2 years	35,405	78,430	31.9	22.1
3-4 years	19,123	43,484	17.2	12.2
5-9 years	15,806	83,890	14.2	23.6
10 or more years	27,071	127,135	24.4	35.7
Sex				
Male	55,678	190,810	50.1	53.6
Female	55,390	164,875	49.9	46.4
Age				
16 to 24	26,567	48,057	23.9	13.5
25 to 34	22,859	84,605	20.6	23.8
35 to 49	40,374	136,101	36.4	38.3
50 to 64	18,087	74,861	16.3	21.0
65 and over	3,181	12,062	2.9	3.4
Education				
Less than high school	16,428	30,347	14.8	8.5
High school graduate or GED	22,211	81,652	20.0	23.0
Some college, but no degree	25,466	64,843	22.9	18.2
Associate (2-year) degree	11,452	30,631	10.3	8.6
Bachelor's (4-year) degree	27,443	95,677	24.7	26.9
Advanced degree	8,069	52,535	7.3	14.8
Poverty Status				
Below Poverty (in poverty)	5,057	2,436	4.6	0.7
Above Poverty (not in poverty)	106,011	353,250	95.4	99.3
Below 200% of Poverty	17,871	19,790	16.1	5.6
Above 200% of Poverty	93,197	335,896	83.9	94.4

TABLE 5.

Characteristics of the Underemployed (either hours or quality) and Other Employed, Omaha CSA (continued)

	Number		Percent	
	Underemployed	Other employed	Underemployed	Other employed
Benefits Offered by Employer				
Retirement plan (401k, pension, etc.)	67,940	289,171	61.2	81.3
Health insurance plan	76,176	293,822	68.6	82.6
Dental insurance plan	64,714	257,959	58.3	72.5
Life insurance plan	62,179	270,550	56.0	76.1
On-site child care	4,292	36,642	3.9	10.3
Paid vacation	75,909	286,867	68.3	80.7
Household Income				
Under \$25,000	8,229	7,036	7.4	2.0
\$25,000 to \$49,999	25,996	50,713	23.4	14.3
\$50,000 to \$74,999	32,391	87,871	29.2	24.7
\$75,000 or more	44,451	210,066	40.0	59.1

Percentage distributions for the underemployed shown in bold differ from corresponding distributions for the other employed with a statistical significance of $p < .05$.



TABLE 6.

Ranking of Obstacles to the Underemployed Getting a Better Job, Omaha CSA

Category	Percent	Weighted Responses
Lack of jobs, opportunities to advance; competition for existing jobs	25.4	43.3
Education, training, skills	11.9	20.3
Don't know/no item given	9.5	16.2
Finding the "right" job (for qualifications, pay, using skill set)	7.8	13.3
In school, student	7.5	12.8
Attitude; personal choice, not willing to make changes to improve job	7.2	12.2
Older age, nearing or in retirement	6.8	11.7
Family considerations	4.4	7.5
Can't afford to look, job security, current pay	4.3	7.3
Haven't looked/tried to find a different job	4.2	7.2
Hiring procedures/emphasis, personal history	3.7	6.4
In job they enjoy, own their own business	3.7	6.3
Health, disability	3.3	5.7
Satisfied with aspects of current job (hours, benefits, responsibilities, employer; not pay)	2.9	5.0
Lack of experience	2.7	4.5
Race, ethnicity	2.3	3.8
Transportation factors	2.0	3.4
No time to look	1.9	3.2

TABLE 7.

Characteristics of Unemployed Workers, Omaha CSA

	Number	Percent
Total persons	19,109	100.0
Age		
16 to 24	7,459	39.0
25 to 64	11,650	61.0
65 and over	n/a	n/a
Education		
Less than high school	4,401	23.0
High school graduate or GED	5,724	30.0
More than high school	8,985	47.0
When last worked		
Within the past 12 months	12,543	65.6
1 to 5 years ago	3,708	19.4
More than 5 years ago	633	3.3
Never	2,225	11.6

"n/a" indicates the survey sample contained no persons in this category.

Survey Methodology

The 2006 Omaha Labor Conditions Survey was conducted through telephone interviews with adults age 19 and older from a random sample of area households. The sample was drawn from households in the Omaha-Council Bluffs Combined Statistical Area (CSA). The Omaha CSA is composed of Douglas, Sarpy, Cass, Dodge, Saunders, Seward and Washington counties in Nebraska along with Pottawattamie, Harrison and Mills counties in Iowa.

Survey Objectives

The UNO Center for Public Affairs Research consulted with the Greater Omaha Chamber to determine what kind of labor force information would be of most value to the community. Through a series of joint discussions, the following key survey objectives were identified:

- Produce current information on basic labor force indicators such as labor force participation, unemployment and underemployment for the Omaha-Council Bluffs CSA.
- Produce current information on the characteristics of the underemployed for the Omaha-Council Bluffs CSA.
- Profile basic characteristics of the labor force in North and South Omaha.

The group also identified several other desirable survey objectives such as developing information on migration to and from the Omaha area and obtaining information on poverty in the area. Questions addressing these topics were included in the survey. Other objectives were considered but not included because they would have been too burdensome to the respondents, too costly to include or not of broad enough value to the community.

Survey Design

The survey objectives called for two different kinds of questions to be asked in the interview. Unemployment, for example, is measured by asking questions about *behavior* – for example, “Have you looked for work in the last four weeks?” Other objectives required asking questions about *opinion* – for example, “Why do you plan to move from the Omaha area?”

It was desirable to gather employment data not just on one person in the household, as typical surveys usually do, but also of each person in the household age 16 and over. To attempt to interview each household member separately, however, would be far too burdensome on the household as well as too costly. The compromise was to ask one respondent in the household to answer a basic set of employment questions for him or herself as well as on behalf of every other person in the household age 16 and over. Since the basic employment questions are ones of behavior, not opinion, allowing one household member to respond on behalf of another should not significantly affect the quality of the results. The design of the questionnaire asked to speak with, “one of the heads of your household

who is 19 years old or older.” This was done since relatively older persons (parents) would more likely know about the characteristics of the jobs younger persons (students) had whereas the younger persons might not know as much about the employment details (i.e., benefits) of older household members.

With questions of opinion, on the other hand, respondents were not asked to answer on behalf of other household members. Instead, opinion questions, as well as some other questions not required to develop basic measures of labor-force status, were asked only of the respondent and not relative to other members of the household.

Survey Instrument

The survey design necessitated separate sections within the survey instrument. The survey first asked basic household characteristics that would guide other necessary portions of the survey. Then the respondent answered employment questions regarding him/herself. Opinion questions and demographic characteristics of the respondent were then asked. If the household contained more than one person age 16 or over, the employment section was then repeated with the respondent answering relative to the other household member’s employment situation. The employment section was asked regarding a maximum of four persons age 16 and over. Census 2000 data indicated that only about 1 percent of area household would have more than four residents age 16 and older.¹

Employment questions were based on the questionnaire used by the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey (ACS) to measure annual employment characteristics. The UNO Center for Public Affairs Research (CPAR) adapted the original ACS written instrument for telephone survey use as well as added questions on subjects of local interest as determined in consultation with the Greater Omaha Chamber.

Sample

The survey used a sample of 942 households interviewed in two phases. Phase 1 consisted of 610 interviews from throughout the nine-county metropolitan area. Telephone numbers for the first phase were selected using a random digit dialing design. This allowed for the inclusion of both listed and unlisted telephone numbers in the sample. Phase 2 called for interviewing 164 additional households in North Omaha ZIP code areas (68102, 68110, 68111 and 68131) and 152 additional households in South Omaha ZIP code areas (68105, 68107 and 68108). The purpose of this “over sampling” was to obtain large enough samples from both North and South Omaha (approximately 200 completed interviews in each area) to support a more in-depth analysis of the labor force in these areas than would have been possible otherwise.

¹Source: Census 2000 Public Use Microdata Samples (PUMS) for Douglas, Sarpy, Cass, Dodge, Saunders and Washington counties (Nebraska portion of the Omaha-Council Bluffs CSA).

Telephone numbers for the second phase were selected from published phone lists and included only persons with listed telephone numbers. The reason for using phone lists rather than random-digit dialing was to avoid the costs of contacting large numbers of households outside the relatively small target areas. (By its nature, random-digit dialing prevents one from predetermining exactly where a household is located.) Even working from published phone lists, a small number of households surveyed during the second phase ended up being outside the North and South Omaha areas. Table 1 shows the number of planned and actual interviews in each phase by area.

Respondent Interviews

Professional interviewers from The MSR Group conducted the interviews primarily between August 11 and September 8, 2006. Unlike their names imply, Phase 2 interviews did not occur after Phase 1 interviews were complete. Interviews for both the Phase 1 sample and Phase 2 over sample occurred throughout the entire timeframe.

Interviewers initially had to terminate calls to households where the respondent did not speak English adequately. This raised a concern regarding the survey being representative for the employment situation of non-English speakers. Thus, to confront this potential drawback of using an English-only survey, the survey text was translated into Spanish and all households whose interview was terminated due to language were called back to try to complete an interview. An interview with those households speaking a language other than Spanish still could not be completed, but this process obtained 14 additional interviews with Spanish-speaking households. These interviews occurred between October 9 and October 15, 2006, and greatly improved the survey's representativeness for Spanish speakers and the overall Omaha metro area as a whole.

After making contact with someone at a selected telephone number, interviewers asked to speak with "one of the heads of your household," based on the belief that older members of a household (versus those under age 20) would be able to more adequately and accurately respond to the survey's employment questions. The belief existed that younger persons would not fully know certain items such as fringe benefits of older household members' (i.e., their parents) jobs while the heads of the households would know most items for younger household members (i.e., their working-age children).

CPAR provided The MSR Group with male and female quotas by county based on respective county populations and screening questions were used to select a male or female as needed. Utilizing quotas helped ensure that the survey responses were not biased by overrepresenting a certain group, in this case by gender. Telephone surveys often obtain more responses from women, especially older women, who tend to be available and willing to complete a survey more often than men. The screening for a head of household did not allow for screening by age to ensure

representativeness for this demographic factor, which can be problematic for reasons previously mentioned. Any imbalance in the survey respondents not being representative of the Omaha metro area were corrected using weighting methods as described later in this report.

Interviewers made at least two callbacks at different times on different days of the week if no one answered at a specific randomly dialed (selected) phone number. Interviewers told respondents that their responses would remain confidential. Surveys were conducted using computer-assisted telephone interviewing.

Error and Confidence Levels

As with all sample surveys, the 2006 Omaha Labor 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 2006 Omaha Labor 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.

Questions asked about all 1,841 persons in the sample have a maximum sampling error of plus or minus 2.3 percent at the 95 percent confidence level. Questions based only on the households (942 interviews) have a maximum sampling error of plus or minus 3.2 percent at the same level of confidence. Note, however, that many of the survey findings pertain to sub-groups of the total sample. For example, information on the characteristics of the employed is based only on those 1,258 persons in the sample who were employed. Information on the underemployed is based on a sample of 305 underemployed, and information on the unemployed is based on a sample of only 56 persons. The sampling error for these samples at the 95 percent confidence level is plus or minus 2.8 percent, 5.6 percent and 13.1 percent respectively.

These estimates of sampling error assume 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 stretch 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 Labor Conditions Survey where the population under study is persons 16 years and older (for basic labor force questions) and persons 19 years and older (for other types of questions), 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 inclusion varied depending on how many telephone numbers served the residence as well as the number of adults living in the household and their ages given the protocol for screening for one of the heads of the household.

In the first phase, for the basic labor force questions (asked of the respondent about persons 16 years and older in the household), a person's probability of being included in the sample varied depending on how many telephone numbers served his or her residence. For example, 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 underrepresentation of certain groups, such as those with lower incomes, less education, minorities and more mobile persons within the area. According to the 2000 Census, 1.6 percent of households in the nine-county area did not have a telephone. Additionally, an increasing number of households are only using cell phones; survey research firms typically do not call cell phone numbers to complete interviews. By the same token, persons living in households with multiple telephone numbers had a greater chance of inclusion than persons living in households with single telephone numbers.

For those few questions asked only of the respondent, a person's probability of being included in the sample also varied depending on how many persons age 19 and older were in the household and whether they were considered one of the heads of the household. For example, an adult living alone in a household whose phone number was selected would be asked those questions with certainty. An adult living with another adult in a household whose telephone number was selected would have a one in two chance of being the respondent.

In the second phase only, phone lists were used rather than random-digit dialing. This means that in addition to the variations in probability of selection described above, persons with unlisted telephone numbers had no chance of being included in the second phase sample.

Nonresponse

Survey nonresponse is the failure to obtain measurements on those selected in the sample. 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, at least three callbacks occurring on different days and at different times were made to complete the interview for each telephone number selected.

Weights

Once the data were collected, they were weighted. The purpose of weighting is to adjust the data for the over or underrepresentation of certain groups. The metropolitan area analysis included all valid survey completes from both phase one and phase two of the survey. By design, the total sample included a disproportionately large number of persons in North and South Omaha. It was therefore necessary to weight the sample by area to accurately reflect the Omaha CSA. After weighting to control for area, the age, sex and race characteristics of the weighted sample were compared to estimates of the population by age, sex and race produced independently by the Census Bureau. The comparison revealed that certain groups were slightly underrepresented in the area-weighted sample. Additional weights were therefore calculated to further adjust the data by age, sex and race. The multiplication of the area weight and the age, sex and race weight produced the final weighting figure ultimately utilized.

Population Estimates

Often the objective of survey research is to estimate the proportion of a population with a given characteristic, such as the percentage of persons who think an elected official is doing a good job. The number of persons represented by the percentage in this example is of little importance. All that really matters is that X percent think the official is doing a good job, and Y percent do not.

In studying an area's labor force, on the other hand, it is valuable to know not only that about 3.9 percent are unemployed but also roughly how many persons compose that 3.9 percent. Is it closer to 100, 1,000 or 10,000? To aid in the interpretation of findings from the 2006 Omaha Labor Conditions Survey, population estimates are included.

The method used to develop population estimates is straightforward. According to the most recent U.S. Census Bureau estimates (2005), 656,240 persons aged 16 and older reside in the nine-county Omaha CSA. By applying survey percentages to this figure, we estimate the number of persons who are in the labor force, unemployed and so on. The reader is cautioned to note that these are only approximations, not exact counts. The population estimates are provided simply to give a sense of perspective in interpreting the survey findings.



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