Appendix B
Oregon Survey Research Laboratory
Survey Methodology
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Wave 1

The telephone survey instrument was devised in numerous intensive meetings with representatives of CSWS (Joan Acker, Sandra Morgen, Terri Heath, Jill Weigt), Adult and Family Services (AFS) (Elizabeth Lopez, Ron Taylor), and OSRL (Patricia Gwartney, Kimberlee Langolf, Mark Lind). To facilitate comparison of results to other studies, we included questions from similar surveys conducted in other states, as well as standard census and survey questions from OSRL’s survey archives and team members’ professional networks. We also developed many original questions.

To pretest and finalize the survey instrument, OSRL’s standard multi-path approach was used. All survey questions underwent a three-pronged pretest procedure, involving intensive readings and reviews by: (a) potential members of the survey population, (b) OSRL’s Questionnaire Review Committee, comprised of survey experts from our staff and university-wide advisory committee, and (c) the project’s AFS and CSWS representatives. Individual questions were pretested for clarity, accuracy, validity, and variability of response. The entire instrument was pretested for flow, length, comprehensiveness, and factors that affect respondents’ cooperation and attention. In addition, two in-depth “cognitive” interviews were conducted by an OSRL staff member. From initial pretesting, it was clear that the survey was drastically too long for the project budget and the instrument was halved. The instrument development team met again for further review, reduction and revision, and the survey was pretested again.

Ultimately, the survey instrument numbered about 275 questions. Due to skip logic, however, few respondents were asked all possible questions. The interviews averaged 31 minutes in length.

Sampling

The survey sample consisted of three groups: TANF leavers, TANF diverted, and Food Stamp leavers. The samples were drawn from populations in AFS’s database as of the first quarter of 1998. The sample data included names, telephone numbers, addresses, locator information for tracking subjects, and background details pertaining to the study.

AFS provided OSRL with information on the population of 5,052 Food Stamp Leavers who fell within the pre-selected study time period, January-March 1998. From these records, OSRL randomly selected a sample of 800 Food Stamp leavers to be interviewed.
This sample was reduced to 750 because 50 Food Stamp leavers had moved out of state and were excluded from the study.

AFS also provided OSRL with a file of TANF leavers and TANF diverted from the first quarter of 1998, consisting of 2,986 cases. From this list, OSRL randomly drew a sample of 799. Of the 799 cases, 362 were TANF diverted and 437 TANF leavers. OSRL’s random sampling procedure naturally reproduces and represents population proportions, consistent with CSWS’s wishes. (That is, there was no need to separately sample TANF leavers and TANF diverted to have the sample proportions match the population parameters.)

After the survey had been in the field for several weeks, it became apparent that the study population was more mobile and difficult to reach than originally anticipated and that AFS’s locator information contained inaccuracies. CSWS, in consultation with OSRL staff, decided to supplement the original survey sample with another random selection from the population. Using the population information AFS previously provided, OSRL drew additional random samples of 1,000 TANF cases (529 leavers and 471 diverted) and 934 Food Stamp cases.

Due to duplicate entries, one case was removed from each of the three samples, for totals of, 967 TANF leavers, 829 TANF diverted, and 1,682 Food Stamp leavers in the final samples available for interviewing -- in all 3,478.

**Survey Interviewing**

Only trained and experienced OSRL telephone interviewers were used for this data collection project. OSRL conducted project-specific interviewer training on the survey instrument February 24, 1999. AFS and CSWS representatives attended this training. In subsequent days, the computer training and role-playing components of training were conducted. Interviewing commenced March 2, 1999 on the original sample. OSRL interviewers began calling the supplemental TANF sample about April 20, 1999 and the additional Food Stamp sample on June 1, 1999. Interviewing was completed June 28, 1999. Interviewing was conducted using OSRL’s computer-aided telephone interviewing system (CATI).

Altogether, 19,666 telephone calls were made to complete 970 interviews. Up to 99 call attempts were made to each randomly-selected respondent. The modal number of call attempts for each respondent was over five. Interviewing was conducted at all times of the day all days of the week (except Sunday mornings) in order to capture persons who had unusual schedules. As mentioned above, interviews averaged 31 minutes.

Approximately 15 survey interviews were conducted in Spanish by fluent OSRL interviewers. OSRL’s CATI system allows Spanish-speaking respondents to be referred directly to Spanish-speaking interviewers. The two Spanish-speaking interviewers assigned to
this study met privately to go over the instrument word by word to agree upon exactly which Spanish words and phrases would be used during interviewing to assure consistency. In the process of conducting the interviews, they referred constantly between their translated version of the survey and the English version on the CATI system. These interviews averaged about 40 minutes.

In addition, about 10 interviews were conducted in other languages using AT&T’s language translation service, provided by AFS. The languages included Russian, Vietnamese, and Hmong. These interviews averaged about 90 minutes, with more time devoted to arranging and explaining the study than actually conducting the three-way interview (interviewer – translator – respondent).

Precontact Letters and Postcards

Because of the survey’s potentially sensitive nature, respondents were sent a pre-contact letter several days prior to interviewing. OSRL and CSWS designed this letter, with contributions from AFS. The letter explained the study’s goals and purpose, and how respondents were chosen, and it stressed the importance of learning about welfare clients’ experiences. The precontact letter also provided a toll-free number with contact names for answering questions and stressed the flexibility of the interview staff (noting that OSRL would call at times convenient to respondents and would have Spanish-speaking interviewers available). The letter also explained the interview’s confidentiality and generally let respondents know what to expect.

The precontact letter was printed on University of Oregon stationary and mailed in UO envelopes with attractive first-class stamps. Each letter was hand-signed and each envelope was hand-addressed. While labor-intensive and somewhat expensive compared to bulk mail, these methods contributed to the survey’s unusually high response rate and low refusal rate, greatly contributing to the study’s success.

Locating, Incenting, and Tracking Efforts

With the goal of achieving a high (70 percent) response rate for this project, OSRL and CSWS used the following locating and incentive strategies:

- Included with the pre-contact letter was a toll-free phone number encouraging respondents to call CSWS with questions or updated contact information.
- Also included with the pre-contact letter was a pre-stamped postcard encouraging respondents to mail CSWS with questions or updated contact information.
- If returned envelopes had forwarding addresses indicated, pre-contact letters were sent to the new address.
- Respondents were encouraged to indicate the best times for OSRL interviewers to contact them.
• An incentive payment of a $25.00 check or $25.00 gift certificate per completed interview was provided to each respondent.

In addition to the methods described above, OSRL, CSWS and AFS cooperated to use a variety of means to track sample members who had moved or no longer had telephone numbers, so that they were not excluded from the study.

• OSRL called the provided telephone numbers repeatedly until we (1) reached the person we intended to interview, (2) determined that the phone number would not produce an interview, or (3) decided that continued effort was no longer cost effective.
• Up to 99 call attempts were made in order to reach respondents.
• Respondents were called at all times of the day and all days of the week (except Sunday mornings).
• If additional contact telephone numbers were provided in locator information, we called those using the same protocol.
• If adults in contacted households provided new telephone numbers or addresses for respondents, these were followed.
• AFS employed additional administrative data sources (such as Department of Motor Vehicle records) to provide additional locator information on subjects who had moved or no longer had a telephone number.
• For respondents who no longer had telephones, we attempted by letter to arrange a specific time and place to call them.

These labor-intensive efforts were effective, producing the study’s high response rate and low refusal rate.

Response Rate and Refusal Rate

The target survey response rate of 70 percent was exceeded. The overall CASRO survey response rate was 84.5 percent, and the CASRO refusal rate was 3.9 percent. Note that this response rate is remarkably high and the refusal rate is remarkably low compared to most survey studies. The response and refusal rates varied substantially by sample group, however: TANF leavers 80.9 percent response rate, 2.0 percent refusal rate; TANF diverted 77.3 percent response rate, 1.1 percent refusal rate; and Food Stamp leavers 90.5 percent response rate, 6.6 percent refusal rate.

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1 CASRO = Council of American Survey Research Organizations. CASRO publishes rigorous industry standards for calculating response rates and refusal rates. Their guidelines are regarded as the strictest and most difficult to achieve. CASRO response rates are calculated in following manner: \( \frac{\text{Completed interview}}{\text{Eligible sample} + (\text{Eligible sample} / (\text{Eligible sample} + \text{Ineligible sample})) \times \text{Sample with unknown status})} \).
Wave 2

A. Instrument Development

The survey instrument for the Wave 2 of interviewing was a revision of the instrument implemented in Wave 1. The first report included considerable detail about the instrument design, pretesting and revision, which need not be repeated here. The second instrument contained 225 questions, compared to 275 in the first instrument. Few respondents answered all possible questions, however, due to skip logic. OSRL pretested it again using our standard multi-path procedures described in the first report.

B. Sample

The survey sample for Wave 2 comprised the same three groups of interviewees from Wave 1 in spring 1999. Those from Wave 1 included 283 TANF leavers, 207 TANF diverted, and 480 Food Stamp leavers.

The sample data included the original information provided by AFS (names, telephone numbers, addresses, locator information for tracking subjects, and background details pertaining to the study), as well as locator information OSRL collected in Wave 1 of interviewing.

C. Survey Interviewing

OSRL conducted project-specific interviewer training for the survey instrument October 12, 1999. The computer training and role-playing components of training were conducted in subsequent days. As before, only trained and experienced OSRL telephone interviewers were used for this project, including many who interviewed for Wave 1.

Wave 2 interviewing commenced October 16, 1999 and was completed December 6, 1999. Interviewing was conducted at all times of the day all days of the week (except Sunday mornings) in order to capture persons who had unusual schedules. OSRL interviewers attempted to contact all respondents originally interviewed in Wave 1. Our goal for Wave 2 was to interview 75 percent of those interviewed in Wave 1. Data collection proceeded exceptionally smoothly compared to the first wave. Indeed, respondents seemed eager to speak with OSRL interviewers again. Altogether, 7,484 telephone calls were made to complete the 757 interviews, or 78 percent of those interviewed in Wave 1, including up to 99 dial attempts for each respondent. Completed interviews averaged 25 minutes.

Approximately 45 survey interviews were conducted in other languages, principally Spanish, using the procedures described in the first report. These interviews averaged about 33 minutes.
D. Response Rate and Refusal Rate

While 78 percent of previous respondents were reached, this is not the same concept as a survey response rate, for many respondents could not be located. The CASRO survey response rate over the three sample groups was 95.2 percent, and the CASRO refusal rate was 1.4 percent. This response rate is exceptionally high and the refusal rate is remarkably low compared even to most longitudinal survey studies.

Combined, TANF leavers and TANF diverted had a 93.7 percent response rate (n=210 leavers, n=165 diverted) and 1.0 percent refusal rate (n=4). Of the original 490 respondents in this group, 97 could not be reached because of wrong telephone numbers, disconnected numbers, non-working numbers, non-residential numbers, they no longer had a telephone number at all, or the number had a fax/modem tone. Two respondents could no longer be interviewed at all due to poor health or tragic circumstances, and five had duplicate telephone numbers. Only 15 respondents could never be reached for an interview.

The response and refusal rates varied slightly by sample group. Food Stamp leavers had a 96.4 percent response rate (n=382) and 1.8 percent refusal rate (n=7). Of the original 480 respondents in this group, 80 could not be reached because of wrong telephone numbers, disconnected numbers, non-working numbers, or non-residential numbers. One respondent was gone during the entire interviewing period, and one had a duplicate telephone number. Only 9 respondents were never reached at all for an interview.