

SSRS OMNIBUS
NATIONAL DUAL-FRAME
TELEPHONE OMNIBUS SURVEY
METHODOLOGY

2020



The SSRS Omnibus is a national, weekly, dual-frame bilingual telephone survey designed to meet standards of quality associated with custom research studies. Each weekly wave of the SSRS Omnibus consists of 1,000 interviews, of which 700 are obtained with respondents on their cell phones, and approximately 35 interviews completed in Spanish. All SSRS Omnibus data are weighted to represent the target population.

Sample Design

The SSRS Omnibus sample is designed to represent the adult U.S. population (including Hawaii and Alaska). SSRS Omnibus uses a fully-replicated, single-stage, random-digit-dialing (RDD) sample of landline telephone households, and randomly generated cell phone numbers.¹ Sample telephone numbers are computer generated and loaded into on-line sample files accessed directly by the computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) system.

Respondent Selection

Within each landline household, a single respondent is selected through the following selection process: First, interviewers ask to speak with the youngest adult male or female at home based on a random rotation. If there are no men/women at home during that time, interviewers ask to speak with the youngest adult female/male at home.

Cell phones are treated as individual devices and the interview may take place outside the respondent's home; therefore, cell phone interviews are conducted with the person answering the phone.

Spanish Language Sample

To facilitate proper representation of the Hispanic population, approximately 35 interviews are conducted weekly in Spanish. Each week, bilingual interviewers contact those households dispositioned as language barriers the previous weeks. Thus, the Spanish sample is, in effect, a subsample of the regular landline and cell phone RDD sampling frames.

Sample Control/Field Period

Interviewing for each SSRS Omnibus survey is conducted over a six-day period, typically from Tuesday through Sunday, thus including weekdays and weekends. Sample telephone numbers are displayed directly on each interviewer's screen. Based on the result of the call, the interviewer either begins the questionnaire introduction or dispositions that particular sample number by entering an appropriate call result code. The result of every attempt is stored for each sample telephone number. Consequently, a full sample disposition can be quickly produced following the completion of each survey.

¹ The landline sample is structured through MSG's Genesys database is using eighteen independent strata, comprised of the nine census divisions, split by metro and non-metro county definitions.

Questionnaire Design/Respondent Information

Each wave of SSRS Omnibus is composed of two distinct parts. The first is a series of inserts contracted by our clients; these inserts may range from a single, closed-ended, question to a twenty-minute battery of open and closed-ended questions. Our staff reviews each insert to ensure that the questions, as worded, will provide clients with the desired information. Clients are given exclusivity for their subject area and inserts may be randomized to reduce bias. Typically, tracking studies are given preference, in terms of placement, within the composite survey.

The CATI system allows for computer control of questionnaire administration, automatic handling of skip pattern response editing, and range checks. Closed-ended responses are ready for tabulation following completion of the last interview. Open-ended responses require additional time for coding and thus are tabulated after the basic closed-ended questions. (Note: pre-coded responses to questions which have an "other" listing are prepared as part of normal closed-end tabulations.)

The second part of the SSRS Omnibus questionnaire includes standard demographic/ classification questions, which include the following:

RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS	HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS
Age*	Income*
Gender*	Homeownership
Education*	Household Size/Composition
Employment Status	Age of children
Race*	Region*
Metro Status*	
Marital Status	
Party Identification	
Political Ideology	
Voter Registration	
Parental Status	
Religion	
Health Insurance Status	

The above demographics are available for construction of custom banners and tables. The starred (*) items indicate questions that are included in the standard banners. Demographics typically are asked toward the end of the survey, with the exception of gender and Hispanic identification.

Detailed geographic data are also included in each respondent record. This facilitates the specification of custom geographic breaks for tabulation or sampling purposes. Geographic data include: Census region, state, metropolitan statistical area (MSA), Designated Market Area (DMA) and metropolitan status.²

² Geographic data is derived from self-reported zip code. If respondents refused zip code, this information is derived from sample information.

CATI Procedures

Each unit in the sample receives as many calls as necessary in order to survey qualified respondents and to fulfill the required number of interviews within each sub-stratum of the samples. Additional callback attempts follow a differential callback schedule (AM/PM, alternate days, weekdays-weekends, etc.) to ensure the highest completion rate possible.

With the increased popularity of telemarketing and the use of telephone answering machines, the problem of non-response has become more acute. SSRS has developed several techniques to alleviate the problem of non-response in order to increase response rates including:

- A clear and early statement that the call is not a sales call
- Informing respondents about how they will be well served by the survey results

In an effort to maximize the response rate in the interview phase, respondents are given every opportunity to complete the interview at their convenience. For instance, those refusing to continue at the initiation of or during the course of the interview will be offered the opportunity to be re-contacted at a more convenient time to complete the interview. Non-responsive numbers, such as no answers, answering machines and busy signals, receive three call attempts.

A key way to increase responses rates is through the use of refusal conversions. Though all of SSRS's interviewers regularly go through "refusal aversion" training, refusals are still a regular part of survey research. SSRS has a core group of specially trained and highly experienced refusal converters who will redial all initial refusals on this project to attempt to convert them to final completed interviews.

Interviewer Briefing/Training

Prior to the start of every Omnibus, interviewers are personally briefed and trained on the issues specific to the inserts. The inserts' overall objectives, specific procedures, and questionnaire content are conveyed to the interviewers. Each and every question is reviewed, and mock interviews are conducted to ensure that all procedures are being followed correctly. In addition, written "job decisions" are created to serve as a manual and record of how to handle out-of-the-ordinary responses to the questionnaires thus promoting interviewer consistency over time.

Throughout the week, strict control procedures are maintained. Field personnel and project directors continually monitor the interviewers. Each time an interview is monitored, a supervisor reviews the responses as they are entered into the CATI system to verify the accuracy of the responses recorded by the interviewer.

In addition, evaluation forms are completed to rate interviewers on diction, refusal conversion, verbatim recording of open ends, probing, etc. Interviewers are counseled on their weaknesses and praised on improvements.

Coding/Editing

Prior to running cross-tabulations, the data are thoroughly cleaned through use of a computer validation program written by one of our data processing programmers. This program establishes editing parameters in order to locate any errors.

After these quality control procedures have been carried out, top-line frequency distributions and arrays are run, as needed.

The data is then ready to be tabulated. Cross-tabulations of each question are run, designating the frequency of each response category for total respondents, selected target sub populations, and other meaningful points of analysis. The Project Director carefully checks each table before final copies are submitted to our clients.

The importance of coding, the process whereby raw data are converted into meaningful categories, cannot be minimized. SSRS employs only experienced coders. Each one is thoroughly trained by the Coding Supervisor prior to beginning work on a study.

Before this training process begins, the Coding Supervisor is briefed and an in-depth review of the unique features of each insert is held with the project direction staff.

Once interviewing is under way, the Coding Department begins transcribing verbatim answers to the open-ended questions. Codes are constructed by the Coding Supervisor or Study Director based on a minimum sample of 20% of respondents.

Codes are built on a frequency of 3% or more. If an answer does not meet the specified frequency, list sheets of Other Responses are maintained. These listings are updated frequently. If they show an emergence of some response which justifies creation of a new category code, such a code is established.

All codes are compiled in a question by question coding manual, which is reviewed in a detailed training session. This training session encompasses the following areas:

- Discussion of the study's background and objectives. Each coder is made aware of how the coding function fits into the overall analytic scheme.
- Question by question and column by column instruction. The entire coding manual is carefully reviewed, with special emphases placed on any problem areas or special features of the project.
- Review of open-ended codes. This ensures that each code is thoroughly understood by the staff.

Tabulation/Reporting

If desired, unweighted topline results on particular questions can be provided to clients, by email, on the morning following the completion of each SSRS Omnibus wave. Complete, weighted topline results are available by Tuesday, though if needed, data can be delivered on Monday.

*** STANDARD BANNER ***	
TOTAL	
GENDER	Male
	Female
AGE	18 - 34
	35 - 44
	45 - 54
	55 - 64
	65 +
HOUSEHOLD INCOME	Under \$25,000
	\$25,000 - \$49,999
	\$50,000 - \$74,999
	\$75,000 and Over
EDUCATION	High School or less
	Some College
	College/Post Grad
RACE	White (Non-Hispanic)
	Black (Non-Hispanic)
	Hispanic
REGION	Northeast
	North Central
	South
METROPOLITAN STATUS	West
	Metro
	Non-Metro

The metropolitan status banner points can be replaced with custom banner points chosen by the client.

Options/Scheduling

The weekly SSRS Omnibus schedule is as follows:

WEEKLY SCHEDULE	
Closing for questions	Monday
Interviewing	Tuesday - Sunday
Top-line results	Monday
Data files/Tabs completed (custom and standard)	Tuesday

The standard tabulations for a project include each client's questions cross-tabulated by the standard banner. All demographic tables are also included. Significance testing is performed on the cross-tabs at no additional cost.

SSRS Omnibus is also capable of handling various sampling/administrative customizations:

- Male/female subsamples
- Geographic subsamples (e.g., Census region, sales region)
- Multiple versions (e.g., split-sample concept tests)
- Geographic-dependent questioning (e.g., time zone versions for broadcast media)

Weighting

Each SSRS Omnibus insert is weighted to provide nationally representative and projectable estimates of the adult population 18 years of age and older. The weighting process takes into account the disproportionate probabilities of household and respondent selection due to the number of separate telephone landlines and cellphones answered by respondents and their households, as well as the probability associated with the random selection of an individual household member. Following application of the above weights, the sample is post-stratified and balanced by key demographics such as age, race, sex, region, and education. The sample is also weighted to reflect the distribution of phone usage in the general population, meaning the proportion of those who are cell phone only, landline only, and mixed users. Specific steps are provided below:

- **Probability of Selection (P_{phone}):** A phone number's probability of selection depends on the number of phone-numbers selected out of the total sample frame. So for each respondent whose household has a landline phone number this is calculated as total landline numbers dialed divided by total numbers in the landline frame and conversely for respondents answering at least one cell phone number, this is calculated as total cell phone numbers divided by total numbers in the cell phone frame.
- **Probability of Respondent selection (P_{select}):** In households reached by landline, a single respondent is selected. Thus, the probability of selection within a household is inversely related to the number of adults in the household.
- **Total Probability of Selection:** This is calculated as the phone number's probability of selection (by frame), and for landlines, divided by the number of adults in the household. Thus, for each respondent a probability can be calculated for being reached via landline (LL_{prob}) and for being reached via cell phone ($Cell_{\text{prob}}$). These calculations are:

$$LL_{\text{prob}} = P_{\text{phone}} * P_{\text{select}}$$

$$Cell_{\text{prob}} = P_{\text{phone}}$$

The sample weights derived at this stage are calculated as the inverse of the combined probability of selection, or:

$$1 / (LL_{\text{prob}} + Cell_{\text{prob}} - LL_{\text{prob}} * Cell_{\text{prob}})$$

- **Post Stratification Iterative Proportional Fitting ('raking')**: With the base-weight applied, the sample will undergo the process of iterative proportional fitting (IPF), in which the sample will be balanced to match known adult-population parameters based on the most recent March Supplement of the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS)³. This process of weighting will repeat until the root mean square error for the differences between the sample and the population parameters is 0 or near-zero.

The population parameters used for post-stratification are: Age (18-29; 30-49; 50-64; 65+) by gender; Census region (Northeast, North-Central, South, West), Education (less than high school, high school graduate, some college, four-year college or more) by age; Education (same breaks) by gender; race/ethnicity (white non-Hispanic; Black non-Hispanic; Hispanic and born in the U.S.; Hispanic and born outside of the U.S.⁴; Other non-Hispanic); marital status (married/not married), population density (divided into quintiles) and phone-usage (cell phone only, landline only, both).

- **Weight truncation ('trimming')**: To ensure the consistency of the population estimates produced week-to-week by Excel, the weights will undergo truncation (or 'trimming') so that they do not exceed 4.0 or fall below under 0.25.

The sum of weights will equal the sample N.

About SSRS

SSRS is a full-service survey research firm managed by industry renowned professionals with advanced degrees in the social sciences. SSRS service offerings include the Omnibus Survey, Probability Panel and other Online Solutions as well as custom research programs – all driven by a central commitment to methodological rigor. The SSRS team is renowned for its multimodal approach, as well as its sophisticated and proprietary sample designs. Typical projects for the company include complex strategic, tactical and public opinion initiatives in the US and in more than 40 countries worldwide. Please visit www.ssrs.com for more information.

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³ Sarah Flood, Miriam King, Renae Rodgers, Steven Ruggles, and J. Robert Warren. Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, Current Population Survey: Version 6.0 [dataset]. Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.18128/D030.V6.0>

⁴ Since this is meant to address the percent of Spanish speakers in the weighted sample, respondents born in Puerto Rico are included with those born outside of the U.S.