

METHODOLOGY FOR THE PRESIDENTIAL APPOINTEE SURVEY (EXECUTIVE ELITE)

Summary

The government portion of the Executive Branch Survey, sponsored by the Annenberg Foundation Sunnylands Trust, conducted telephone interviews with 501 presidential appointees who served in the second Ronald W. Reagan administration, or the George H. Bush, William H. Clinton or George W. Bush administrations in an Executive Level I-IV position requiring Senate confirmation. The interviews were conducted by Princeton Data Source, LLC from August 25 to November 10, 2003. The margin of sampling error for the complete set of weighted data is $\pm 4.4\%$. The margin of error is $\pm 9.7\%$ for the sample of 104 George W. Bush appointees, $\pm 7.1\%$ for the 190 Clinton appointees, $\pm 8.6\%$ for the 132 George H. Bush appointees and $\pm 11.4\%$ for the 75 Reagan appointees. Details on the design, execution and analysis of the government portion of the Executive Branch survey are discussed below.

Sample Design

The government portion of the Executive Branch Survey focused on presidential appointees who had served in at least one of five presidential administrations between 1984 and 2003. Every effort was made to ensure that the lists of presidential appointees were as exhaustive as possible.

Past Administrations: 1984-1999

The sample of appointees who served between 1984 and 1999 included appointees who served in either a cabinet department or one of six independent agencies: the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the Small Business Administration (SBA), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) or the United States Information Agency (USIA).

PSRAI identified the population of 1984-1999 appointees in three stages: First, using the list of presidential appointments published every four years in *U.S. Government Policy and Supporting Positions*, PSRAI culled the titles of Executive Level I-IV presidential appointee positions requiring Senate confirmation. Again, this was limited to cabinet departments and six independent agencies. Second, using the *U.S. Government Manual*, PSRAI matched these titles with the names of those who held them. Third, using a variety of search strategies, including Who's Who and Internet directories, PSRAI matched names with addresses and telephone numbers.

Current Administration: 2000-2003

For the sample of presidential appointees serving in the current George W. Bush administration, PSRAI used the *Federal Leadership List* by the Leadership Directories, Inc. The *Federal Leadership List* provides contact information for leaders in the 14 cabinet-level departments and over 70 independent agencies and identifies positions that require presidential appointment. The *Federal Leadership List* is updated quarterly with publication of the *Federal Yellow Book*. Following the design for earlier administrations,

PSRAI selected only presidential appointees with Senate confirmation who served in a Cabinet department or one of five independent agencies: the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the Small Business Administration (SBA), or the United States Information Agency (USIA).

Contact Procedures

PSRAI sent letters to presidential appointees on behalf of the Annenberg Foundation explaining the purpose of the survey. Interviews were conducted by highly qualified elite interviewers from August 25 to November 10, 2003. Over 20 attempts were made to contact every sampled appointee. Calls were staggered over times of day and days of the week to maximize the chance of making contact with potential respondents.

Weighting

Weighting is generally used in survey analysis to adjust for effects of the sample design and to compensate for patterns of nonresponse that might bias results. The sample of presidential appointees was adjusted to give equal weight to each of the five administrations. Table 1 compares weighted and unweighted sample parameters.

Table 1: Weight Calculation

Administration	Unweighted		Weighted		Weight
Reagan	75	20.80%	100	20%	1.33
G.H. Bush	132	26.30%	100	20%	0.76
Clinton	190	37.90%	201	40%	1.06
G.W. Bush	104	20.80%	100	20%	0.96

Respondents who served in more than one administration are classified based on the last administration they served in. At the outset of each interview, we confirmed with the respondent that they were in fact a presidential appointee of the presumed administration. Later on, we asked the appointees if they had served in any other administrations. The fact that we classified appointees based on the last administration they served in may partly account for the lower incidence of Reagan appointees in the final sample.

Margin of Error

The survey's *margin of error* is the largest 95% confidence interval for any estimated proportion based on the total sample—the one around 50%. For example, the margin of error for the entire sample is $\pm 4.4\%$. This means that in 95 out every 100 samples drawn using the same methodology, estimated proportions based on the entire sample will be no more than 4 percentage points away from their true values in the population. The margin of error is $\pm 9.7\%$ for the sample of 104 George W. Bush appointees, $\pm 7.1\%$ for the 190 Clinton appointees, $\pm 8.6\%$ for the 132 George H. Bush appointees and $\pm 11.4\%$ for the 75 Reagan appointees.

It is important to remember that sampling fluctuations are only one possible source of error in a survey estimate. Other sources, such as respondent selection bias, questionnaire wording and reporting inaccuracy, may contribute additional error.

Response Rate

Table 2 reports the disposition of all sampled telephone numbers dialed. The response rate estimates the fraction of all eligible respondents in the sample that were ultimately interviewed. At PSRAI it is calculated by taking the product of three component rates:

- Contact rate – the proportion of working numbers where a request for interview was made
- Cooperation rate – the proportion of contacted numbers where a consent for interview was at least initially obtained, versus those refused
- Completion rate – the proportion of initially cooperating and eligible interviews that were completed

Thus, the response rate for this survey overall was 45 percent. As we expected, the response rate varied by administration with the appointees of the current George W. Bush administration (24%) considerably less likely to participate than appointees who served in the Clinton (55%), George H. Bush (56%) or Reagan (55%) administrations.

Table 2: Sample Disposition

Total Numbers dialed	1702	
Wrong number	168	
Disconnects	36	
Working numbers	1151	
No Answer	5	
Busy		
Left Voice Mail	73	
Callbacks	215	
Other Non-Contacts		
Contacted numbers	842	73%
Gatekeeper Refusal	78	
Respondent Refusal	219	
Cooperating numbers	545	65%
Ineligible	19	
Eligible numbers	526	
Interrupted	25	
Completes	501	95%
Response Rate		45%