

Sacramento Regional Survey Panel

Methodology & Survey Panelist Profile

September 2022

Summary

Since 2017, the Institute for Social Research (ISR) at Sacramento State in partnership with Valley Vision has maintained an online survey panel for the purposes of conducting research about the greater Sacramento Region. Our survey panel is a representative group of individuals who have agreed to participate in multiple surveys over time. This methodology has replaced traditional phone surveys and was developed to address the declining response rates and reliability associated with telephone surveys. Online survey panels have become an alternative way to gather data about a specific region or population (e.g., El Dorado, Placer, Sacramento, Sutter, and Yolo, and Yuba counties). GfK's Knowledge Panel, YouGov's Omnibus Panel, National Opinion Research Center (NORC)'s Amerispeak Panel, and the Pew Research Center's American Trends use similar sampling methodologies. Individuals were recruited into the panel by an invitation postcard, which was sent to a random sample of households in the 6-county region (i.e., Any adult in the household could join the panel by going to the online profile or by calling ISR to indicate a preference to participate with mail-in surveys. The strength of this probability-based sampling method is that virtually everyone in the Sacramento Region had a chance of being included. Panelists have the option of receiving a \$5 electronic gift card every time they complete a survey or donating it to the study. Statistical weighting is used to ensure survey responses represent the Sacramento Region.

Survey Panel Methodology

Sampling and Recruitment | The Greater Sacramento Region Panel uses probability-based sampling methods. Specifically, to recruit a random sample of Sacramento Region residents we use the United States Postal Service Delivery Sequence File (USPS DSF) of California residential addresses (stratified geographically by county and Hispanic population), as a sampling frame. We send postcards or letters to the sampled residences and invite adult residents to join the panel (via a URL address, or by calling us to indicate a preference for mail participation). The strength of this sampling method is that virtually everyone in the population has a chance of being included in the sample, but those sampled must also choose to do so. The initial sample includes residents from the following counties: El Dorado, Placer, Sacramento, Yuba, Sutter, and Yolo. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) at California State University, Sacramento reviewed and approved recruitment procedures outlined above for protecting the rights of human research subjects.

Consent and Initial Profile | During recruitment (and at the beginning of each subsequent survey), panelists learn that their participation is entirely voluntary and that they have the right to opt out at any time. They also learn that their survey responses are strictly confidential. Immediately upon agreeing to join the panel, panelists complete a 15-minute survey that includes questions about their demographics, background, interests, personality, political identity, and household composition. This profile information is merged with future survey data

collections, thereby reducing the need to ask panelists to answer these questions with each survey administered.

Survey Procedures | ISR uses the Qualtrics Research Suite online survey platform to administer surveys. The research team optimizes all surveys for completion on mobile phones and tablets and provides Spanish translations. Panelists receive reminders to complete the surveys every three days following the initial invitation. The Valley Vision profile surveys were offered in English, Spanish, and Chinese. All subsequent surveys have been offered in both English and Spanish. Each time a panelist completes a survey, they receive a \$5 Tango gift card, delivered directly to their email inbox or home address, which is redeemable at most online retailers. Beginning in 2019 panelists were given the option to receive the Tango gift card or “donate” it back to the study so more people can participate.

Survey Weighting and Analysis | For each survey, the weighting protocol proceeds in stages. First, the base weights are computed to reflect the various selection probabilities for respondents selected from different sampling frames. Second, we adjust for nonresponse and under-coverage by calibrating the base weights to known population-based control totals for gender and age, race/ethnicity, education, income and county using a ‘raking’ process. The population benchmarks are obtained from the most recent Census Bureau’s American Community Survey 5-year estimates and Nielsen Claritas estimates. Finally, we “trim” the raked weights to reduce extreme values. The weighting process ensures that the responses from the panelists responding to the survey will statistically represent the demographics of the Greater Sacramento Region.

Surveys are analyzed by reporting out the percent of panelists (who are representative of the Greater Sacramento Region) providing responses to the various questions. Survey results are also often broken down by panelist characteristics, such as gender, income levels, race, and other key demographic information. When the survey responses are broken down by these categories (or disaggregated into cross-tabulations), a statistical test is run to ensure that the differences among these groups are statistically significant (i.e., any differences are not the result of “noise” in the data).

Collaborative Research Partnership with Valley Vision

Since 2017, the Institute for Social Research has partnered with Valley Vision to build and support the Sacramento Regional Survey Panel. Valley Vision is a non-profit with a mission to “bring communities together to tackle our region's biggest challenges and ensure a more livable future.” To date, ISR and Valley Vision have collaborated together on ten polls which have informed policymakers and stakeholders on key regional issues by providing on-the ground public engagement data. Read more about these polls at valleyvision.org.



Current Survey Panel

The most recent survey panel was created in in March-April of 2022. ISR recruited new participants using Address Based Sampling and also invited previous panelist to re-enroll and update their profile information. Recruitment involved mailed invitations sent to a random



selection of residential addresses in the six counties that comprise the panel: El Dorado, Placer, Sacramento, Sutter, Yolo, and Yuba. The invitation provided adults with the ability to complete the recruitment survey online, or to request a survey by mail. The existing panel participants were sent an email invitation or mailed survey (based on their preference) asking them to confirm their interest in continuing their participation in the panel by refreshing their demographics through the survey. A total of 3,037 participants make up the panel. Of these 2,279 (75.0%) were new recruits and 758 (25.0%) were recruited from previous panel participants. The margin of error for the panel is 1.8%.

Imputation and Weighting | All survey responses were reviewed for eligibility and a clean dataset of the weighting variables were sent to MSG (Marketing Systems Group). Any missing data was imputed and a weight variable computed based on population data from the latest American Community Survey. Variables used to weight the data were: sex, age, ethnicity, race, education, household income, marital status, and county.

Questions About the Panel?

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Panel Variables

Description of Panelists | September 2022

COUNTY of RESIDENCE	PANEL	
	#	%
Sacramento	1,866	61.5
Placer	457	15.0
Yolo	272	9.0
El Dorado	241	7.9
Sutter	107	3.5
Yuba	94	3.1
Total	3,037	100

AGE	PANEL	
	#	%
18 to 24	314	10.3
25 to 34	569	18.8
35 to 44	518	17.0
45 to 54	489	16.1
55 to 64	506	16.7
65 and over	641	21.1
Total	3,037	100

RACE & ETHNICITY	PANEL	
	#	%
White	1,753	57.7
Hispanic	607	20.0
Asian & Pacific Islander	402	13.2
Black or African American	192	6.3
Other	83	2.7
Total	3,037	100

EDUCATION	PANEL	
	#	%
High school diploma/GED or less	925	30.4
Attended some college (no degree)	820	27.0
Associate's degree	310	10.2
Bachelor's degree or more	981	32.3
Total	3,037	100

GENDER	PANEL	
	#	%
Female	1612	53.1
Male	1425	46.9
Total	3,037	100

HOUSEHOLD INCOME	PANEL	
	#	%
Less than \$15,000	224	7.4
\$15,000-\$20,000	65	2.1
\$20,000-\$25,000	91	3.0
\$25,000-\$30,000	81	2.7
\$30,000-\$40,000	196	6.5
\$40,000-\$50,000	195	6.4
\$50,000-\$75,000	490	16.1
\$75,000-\$100,000	398	13.1
\$100,000-\$150,000	619	20.4
\$150,000-\$200,000	298	9.8
\$200,000 or above	381	12.5
Total	3,037	100

EMPLOYMENT STATUS	PANEL	
	#	%*
Employed for wages	1,549	51.0
Self-employed	253	8.3
Out of work for 1 year or more	69	2.3
Out of work for less than 1 year	46	1.5
Stay-at-home parent / homemaker	116	3.8
Student	225	7.4
Retired	660	21.7
Unable to work	95	3.1
Other	19	.6
Refused	4	.1
Total	3,037	100



Example Panel Variables

Other Panelist Demographics and Identifications

- Primary Language | What is your primary language?
- Home Language | Do you speak any other languages at home?
- Gender Identity | What is your current gender identity?
- Sexual Orientation | Do you think of yourself as (sexual orientation)?
- Marital Status | What is your marital status?
- Household Size | How many people total live in your household?
- Child Household | How many people under 18 live in your household?
- Religious Identity | Which of the following categories best describes your religious identity?
- Public Programs | Do you or someone in your household participate in any of the following government or school programs?

Residence

- Urbanicity | Do you live in a city, suburb, small town or rural community?
- Years in Region | How long have you lived in the Sacramento region?
- Years at Residence | How long have you lived at your current residence?
- Home Ownership | Is your primary residence, owned rented, occupied without rent?

Outlook & Community

- Life Satisfaction | Generally speaking, how satisfied are you with your life?
- Future Outlook | Generally speaking, what is your outlook on the future?
- Physical Health | How would you rate your physical health?
- Community Connection | In general, how attached do you feel to your local community?
- Community Satisfaction | Overall, how satisfied are you with the quality of life in your local community?

Political Affiliations

- Registered Voter | Are you currently registered to vote in the U.S.?
- Political Party | Which political party are you officially registered with?
- Political Ideology | In politics today, do you generally think of yourself as (very progressive > very conservative)
- Follow News | How often would you say you follow what's going on in government and public affairs?