

Appendix G: Telephone Interviewer Training Manual

This is a copy of the final manual that was used by MPR to train their CATI interviewers for this survey. The manual covers everything from the purpose of the survey to how to conduct the interview and deal with difficult interview situations. Answers to commonly asked questions and objections are included.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. MATHEMATICA POLICY RESEARCH

Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. (MPR) is a social research and evaluation company, with offices in Princeton, New Jersey (headquarters), Washington, DC, Columbia, Maryland, and Cambridge, Massachusetts. Founded in 1968, the company is known for its work on welfare, labor, housing, health, education, and transportation policy, and for national surveys on a wide range of critical policy issues. The company's staff of approximately 300 full-time regular employees includes economists, sociologists, political scientists, survey researchers, systems analysts, and programmers. They are augmented by an on-call staff of interviewers, coders, and data entry specialists.

B. OVERVIEW OF THE OMNIBUS 2000 SURVEY

The Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS) is conducting this survey of satisfaction with the transportation system in response to the Government Performance Results Act (GPRA), which recommends that agencies measure customer satisfaction with their performance on a regular basis. The last BTS-sponsored survey regarding satisfaction with transportation issues was completed in early 1999 by the University of Maryland Joint Program in Survey Methods. This effort was a survey of 2,000 households in the U.S. Prior to that effort, the National Highway User Survey was conducted in the Fall of 1995. Results of this study were used to assess the quality of our nation's highways.

C. PURPOSE OF THE OMNIBUS SURVEY

Battelle, under contract to BTS, has subcontracted with MPR to conduct the data collection activities for this project. The primary purpose of this survey is to assess customer satisfaction with transportation across all transportation modes, with an emphasis on highway related satisfaction. The results will be used to identify agency operations that need improvement, and areas where changes in existing operations might improve the delivery of services. This survey will also serve as an information source for DOT administrators to help them meet strategic goals and respond to requests for information from public and private resources.

D. SURVEY ADMINISTRATION

All surveys for this study will be conducted by telephone using computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI). This is a random-digit-dial (RDD) project. Therefore, you will be calling phone numbers, and when you reach a residence, selecting a respondent as the household's sampled respondent (you will not know who the respondent is when you call the phone number). You will also schedule a call-back if the sampled household member is not home at the time of initial contact and sample selection.

E. SURVEY SCHEDULE

Data collection for the Spring 2000 Survey will begin on May 30th and end on June 30th. You will be trained on two different surveys for this project. While the screener and demographic sections of Survey A and Survey B are the same, the content sections contain different questions about transportation items. Our goal is to complete 1,000 surveys with version A and 1,000 with version B. The computer will randomly select which survey you will be administering. Each version of the survey should last an average of 15 minutes from start to finish.

The telephone calls you make will be controlled by *the automatic scheduler*; a computer program that schedules interviews. The program ensures that the sample is allocated efficiently, that appointments are not missed, and that errors are not made in dialing telephone numbers.

F. USE OF THIS MANUAL

This manual is designed to provide each interviewer with a detailed guide to his or her responsibilities and the procedures necessary for fulfilling them. It covers topics ranging from general survey issues and procedures (for example, confidentiality of data) to specific information about the administration of the instrument for this survey. This manual is designed to provide the interviewer with a framework within which to operate.

Before beginning to interview, the interviewer must be thoroughly familiar with this manual. Detailed in-person training will be provided, followed by paired role-play practice on the CATI, individual monitoring, and supervision as needed. This manual will serve as a reference to be used throughout the field period. In addition, supervisors who have had special training will be available to offer help and guidance.

G. KEY PROJECT AND SURVEY STAFF

Key staff at MPR are assigned to the following project positions to manage the data collection.

- Project Director
- Survey Director
- Survey Manager
- Lead Supervisor
- Assistant Supervisors

H. THE PROJECT CHARGE NUMBER

The project charge number for telephone interviewers and supervisors on this project is _____.

I. THE 800# - PROJECT STUDY AND CONTACT NAMES

The call-in number for this project is _____ and the call-in contact name is _____. The official name of the project is the Omnibus 2000 Study. Respondents who call in will be asked to reference their phone number for identification purposes.

II. CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEW

A. CONFIDENTIALITY

One of the most important duties of an interviewer (and all MPR employees) is to protect the confidentiality of data gathered during surveys. The responsibility starts with interviewers, but project and survey directors, principal investigators and senior company officials are just as obligated to the protection of sample member confidentiality. We at MPR, like others in the research community, feel strongly about the right to confidentiality of those who participate in our studies. MPR has a legal and moral obligation to assure respondents that the names of individuals and any information gathered about them will be held in the strictest confidence, will be used only for the purposes of the study, and will never be released in a form where individuals could be identified. A confidentiality pledge is signed by all employees to affirm that we accept the responsibility to protect confidentiality.

Protecting the confidentiality of respondents means that information about individual respondents is not made available to anyone outside the immediate research project. Within the research project, access to information identifying individuals is limited to those whose roles demand it and only for the period required. Physical safeguards such as locked file cabinets protect the data and prevent unauthorized access.

In this RDD project, you will not know the names of the household members when you initially call. During the screener you will ask for a roster of either each household member's first name or initials. This data will be used to select the respondent. The names or initials will remain confidential and it will not become part of the data file.

B. THE ROLE OF THE INTERVIEWER

As an interviewer, you play a critical role in motivating respondents to participate and to provide accurate information. This is especially true for RDD projects! It is important to show interest in the study and enthusiasm for your work, as these will help gain the respondent's cooperation. During the first seconds of speaking with the household (HH) your main objective should be to convince respondents that the interview will be a worthwhile experience. In this particular study, you may be able to gain their cooperation by letting them know that their answers will help guide future efforts at improving the transportation system in their community.

1. The BTS Pretest

The integrity of this study rests primarily on the quality of survey data that you, as the interviewer, collect. Considerable effort goes into the development of questions that are neutral, accurate and understandable to respondents. Before questions were used in this study, MPR conducted a pretest study. The survey questions were pretested with actual respondents to identify and correct problems. Interviewer feedback was incorporated and the survey was made better due to this process.

2. Survey Standardization

To ensure that the data are reliable, it is essential that all respondents hear the same questions. This means that **all interviewers must ask the questions exactly as written, in the same order, and in the same way.** The tone of the interview should be conversational, but without introducing information that may change the meaning of a question or bias a response.

You will notice in this survey that many of the answer categories for each section are repeated. The general rule for this project is that for each section **all** answer categories must be read to the respondent **at least once.** Once the respondent “catches on” and understands the available answer options, then the interviewer does not need to repeat all the answer categories except as a prompt where the respondent seems to be hesitating over a response or is repeatedly selecting the same category.

All interviewers trained on this project are required to participate in general interview training (GIT). For specific guidelines on collecting the highest quality data, you are encouraged to review the techniques outlined in your GIT manual regarding accurate listening, effective probing, and avoiding bias. You will be required to use these techniques during the data collection process. In the sections that follow, we will review some specific techniques for establishing rapport and avoiding refusals.

C. ESTABLISHING RAPPORT AND GAINING COOPERATION

1. Preparing to Call

No advance letter will be sent to households selected for our sample, so respondents will have no prior knowledge of the study at the time of first phone contact. *As a result, gaining the respondent’s cooperation will depend heavily on your approach and ability to establish rapport with the person who answers the phone during the first few seconds of the call!* To help ensure a successful outcome, prepare yourself for the call before dialing the number. Put a smile in your voice. Sit upright in a comfortable position in your chair. If you are slouching in your seat, your voice will sound slouchy, too. Think positively. Always assume that the respondent will cooperate. If you don’t think that he or she will want to cooperate, you will communicate this message to him or her through the tone of your voice.

Here is the introduction that you will read to the respondent when he or she answers the phone.

Hello, my name is _____. I am calling on behalf of the U.S. Department of Transportation. We are conducting a brief survey to make sure the nation's transportation system meets the needs of your community. We would like to include the opinion of a member of your household who is 18 or older.

May I please speak to a household member who is 18 years or older?

Throughout training you will be required to practice reading this introduction out loud to your role-play partner, until you feel comfortable with it. Learn where you need to take a breath, which words are the hardest for you to pronounce correctly, where to pause for good effect, and which parts of the introduction you are hesitating on. If you introduce the study smoothly and confidently, respondents will be more likely to cooperate. You will note in the introduction that the Department of Transportation's name is referenced. This is intended to lend credibility and integrity to the study.

2. Information Screen

To assist you during the introduction / engagement process, we have included an "information screen" directly in the CATI. Following the introduction shown above, you will see this list of response options:

- <1> SPEAKER IS 18 OR OLDER
- <2> WILL CALL SOMEONE 18 OR OLDER TO THE PHONE
- <3> NO PERSON 18 OR OLDER HOME NOW
- <4> NO PERSONS 18 OR OLDER IN THE HOUSEHOLD
- <5> PROBABLE MENTAL IMPAIRMENT
- <6> LANGUAGE BARRIER / HEARING IMPAIRMENT
- <7> HOUSEHOLD REFUSAL
- <8> NOT A RESIDENCE
- <9> WANTS MORE INFORMATION

When you enter the number 9, three screens will display information about the study to help you engage with the respondent and answer questions. The screens provide the following information:

INFORMATION SCREEN

The Department of Transportation has a contract with Mathematica, a policy research company in Washington, D.C., to conduct the survey.

Authority for the BTS 2000 Omnibus Survey

In accordance with the Privacy Act of 1974 (Public Law 93-579), this notice informs you of the purpose of the survey and how the findings will be used.

AUTHORITY: The 2000 Omnibus Survey is being conducted in response to the Government Performance and Results Act (CPRA) which recommends that agencies measure customer satisfaction with their performance on a regular basis.

PRINCIPAL PURPOSE: The Spring 2000 Omnibus survey is a continuation of surveys on customer satisfaction with the transportation system, with a particular focus on highway related satisfaction. This survey is intended to identify agency operations that need quality improvement, provide an early detection of problems, and focus on areas where changes in existing operations might improve the delivery of services. This survey will also serve as an information source for the DOT modal administrators that can be utilized to help them meet their strategic goals and respond to requests for information from public and private sources.

ROUTINE USES: The information obtained from this survey will be used by private, state government, and federal government agencies in planning improvements in the Nation's travel and transportation systems. Some findings may be presented in publications, journals or conferences.

DISCLOSURE: Providing information on this survey is voluntary, and there is no penalty if you choose not to respond. However, you are encouraged to participate to insure that the data collected are complete and accurate. Your survey instrument will be treated as confidential.

Respondents are not required to respond to any information collection unless it displays a valid approval number from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). The OMB control number for this collection is 2139-0007 and it expires 08/31/2000.

3. Disposition Codes

When you use the "auto" dialer to call the household number, the following disposition codes will appear on the screen:

DIAL THIS NUMBER: _____

TIME: ()

RESPONDENT:

NEXT Q:

<d> AUTODIAL THE NUMBER

<1> SOMEONE ANSWERS

<2> NO ANSWER AFTER 6 RINGS

<3> ANSWERING MACHINE

<6> BUSY

<7> COMPUTER MODEM OR FAX LINE

<8> TEMPORARILY NOT-IN-SERVICE

<9> CIRCUIT PROBLEMS; CIRCUITS OVERLOADED

- <10> FAST BUSY; FAST RING; NO RING
- <11> NOT-IN-SERVICE; DISCONNECTED; NON-WORKING; CHANGED TO
NEW NUMBER
- <12> VOICE MAIL / ACCESS CODE NEEDED
- <13> HUDI – HUNG UP DURING INTRODUCTION
- <14> MISTAKE – DON'T WANT THIS CASE
- <15> BEEPER
- <h> DISPLAY HISTORY

Selecting the correct disposition code is essential because it will determine how the case will be handled from this point. For example, getting no answer is not the same as getting an answering machine, and different procedures will be followed for each of these two results. Please be sure to familiarize yourself with the full list of possible disposition codes to ensure accuracy when assigning a code.

4. Determining Residence or Business Phones

Most of the numbers you will call will be residences or people's homes. Occasionally you will get a business. Business numbers or other ineligible phone numbers must be coded appropriately. For instance, if you speak to someone who says, "Hello, this is [a business name]" you can say, "Sorry I've reached this number in error" then code <8> below.

- <1> SPEAKER IS 18 OR OLDER
- <2> WILL CALL SOMEONE 18 OR OLDER TO THE PHONE
- <3> NO PERSON 18 OR OLDER HOME NOW
- <4> NO PERSONS 18 OR OLDER IN THE HOUSEHOLD
- <5> PROBABLE MENTAL IMPAIRMENT
- <6> LANGUAGE BARRIER / HEARING IMPAIRMENT
- <7> HOUSEHOLD REFUSAL
- <8> **NOT A RESIDENCE**
- <9> WANTS MORE INFORMATION Item: INEL

By coding an <8> you will get the INELIGIBLE SCREEN:

- <1> NO ONE 18 OR OVER

<2> INSTITUTIONALIZED

<3> PRISON/JAIL

NOT A HOUSEHOLD:

<4> BUSINESS

<5> GOVERNMENT OFFICE

<6> HOSPITAL/NURSING HOME/LONG TERM CARE FACILITY

<7> ROOMING HOUSE

<8> MILITARY BARRACKS

<9> DORMITORY WITH PHONE

Here you can code a <4> since it is a business.

You might also call a number that turns out to be a “non-household” residence, like a rooming house, military barracks or a dormitory. For the purposes of this study, we do not consider these places households. If you find you have reached a place that fits into one of these categories (e.g., nursing home, rooming house, barracks, dormitory), select the appropriate ineligible code listed on the screen.

It is also possible that you may call a household that is not eligible for the study. For example, if no one who lives in the household is 18 years of age or older, the household is ineligible for this study, and you should code <1>. Also, individuals who are institutionalized (e.g., in a hospital or nursing home) or who are in prison are not eligible for this study. Please be familiar with all codes since you must code each unique situation as applicable.

5. Rostering the Household

For this project you will be interviewing a representative sample of adults (age 18 and over) living in households with working telephones. You will ask the person who answers the phone to list all members of the household starting with the oldest person and proceeding from oldest to youngest. You will list them by name or initials, as the speaker prefers. This process is known as “rostering the household”. The computer will randomly select one adult in each household to be interviewed. At that point, you will ask to speak with the selected individual.

6. Leaving Answering Machine Messages

We are building an experiment into the study to learn if leaving answering machine messages helps increase our response rate. Therefore, in some cases the computer will indicate that an answering

machine message should be left and in other cases it will not. When you type in the answering machine code you may (or may not) see a script. The script is as follows:

Hello, I'm [INSERT INTERVIEWER NAME] calling on behalf of the Department of Transportation. We are calling to invite you to participate in a brief survey to determine satisfaction with your local communities transportation system. Could you please call our toll free number _____ and ask to speak with the study supervisor, _____. Please reference the phone number [INSERT NUMBER DIALED] when you call. We look forward to speaking with you. Again, that toll free number is _____. Thank you, good-bye.

If the script appears you will leave a message. We will not be leaving answering machine messages every time, so do not be alarmed if the script does not appear. Please remember that your voice is the first contact that the household has to the study. Thus, your voice should be friendly and clear. You want to make a good first impression with the respondent in hopes that he or she will call us back on the #800 toll free number.

7. Handling Objections

Since you are the first point of contact for this study, you need to be prepared to overcome initial objections. Often you will need to answer the respondents' questions before you can administer the interview. Five common reasons for not wanting to cooperate are:

- The respondent questions the **purpose of the study**
- The respondent questions the **legitimacy of the study**
- The respondent questions the **selection process** ("Why me?")
- The respondent is concerned about the **time** required
- The respondent has **fears about being interviewed**

When a respondent avoids the interview you might wonder why we don't just forget about him or her and go on to the next case. For the data to be valid, we must try to convince each respondent who is selected for the study to cooperate. Each respondent selected for the study represents many others of similar age and background. He or she can't be replaced. Therefore, we want to encourage each respondent to participate.

8. Answers to Commonly Asked Questions and Objections

1. Why is the Department of Transportation conducting this survey?

The Department of Transportation is conducting a brief survey to determine satisfaction with the nation's transportation system. The information you provide will be used to plan improvements in the nations' travel and transportation systems.

2. Who do you work for?

I work for Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. We were hired by The Department of Transportation to conduct the surveys.

3. May I speak to someone else about the study?

FIRST:

I can get my study supervisor, _____ or you can call _____ and ask to speak with _____, the study supervisor.

IF THEY WANT SOMEONE AT THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION:

I would be happy to have the Project Manager at the Department of Transportation call you directly. Please give me your name and phone number and I will be sure to have them call you back. Please tell me what your concerns are so that I can forward this information to the Project Manager.

COMPLETE A PROBLEM SHEET AND PROVIDE THIS INFORMATION TO YOUR SUPERVISOR (BE SURE TO INCLUDE: NAME, PHONE NUMBER, AND CONCERN).

4. How did you get my phone number?

Your number was randomly selected from a nationwide sample. This means it was “by chance” that your phone number was selected. We will also be collecting data from 2,000 other randomly selected households nationwide.

5. Why do you need to talk to me (or this household)?

Your opinions are very important. You can help us determine satisfaction with the transportation in your local community. The information obtained from this survey will be used in planning improvements in the nation’s travel and transportation systems.

6. I don’t have time to participate in a survey.

I can schedule the interview at any time that is convenient for you. Also, if you prefer, we can start the interview now and finish it later.

OR: Maybe I’ve caught you at a bad time. Would tomorrow or later today be a better time to call back? Would the weekend be better? When would be a good time to call back?

7. How long is the survey going to take?

This is a very brief survey that will only take about 15 minutes. Lets get started now.

8. What happens to the information I give you? Where does it go? Who handles it?

The only people who will have access to the information you give us are our own staff who have taken an oath of confidentiality. Even they will never see or hear your name or the names of anyone in your family. As added protection, I am required by law not to reveal any information other than to persons directly involved with the study. Each person associated with the study is

required to sign a promise that they will keep confidential all information provided by respondents. Survey results will be published only as statistical totals, and your name will not be associated with any of the data.

9. I don't want to buy anything!

I am not selling anything or soliciting money. This is an important study sponsored by the Department of Transportation. We are trying to gather information about people's satisfaction with various modes of transportation in the U.S. Let's start now. [QUICKLY ASK THE FIRST QUESTION]

10. I don't do surveys.

I'm sorry you may have had unpleasant experiences with other surveys. Your answers are extremely important and your participation is needed to make this survey a success. I think you'll find the questions in this survey interesting. Let's start and you can see.

11. Can I refuse items in the survey?

Providing information on this survey is voluntary, and there is no penalty if you choose not to respond. However, you are encouraged to participate to insure that the data collected are complete and accurate. Your survey will be treated as confidential.

12. Will you send me the study results?

There is no plan to release the results to the individuals participating in the survey. The data will be analyzed and reports will be issued by other Department of Transportation offices.

Table G-1: Refusal Conversions.

Reasons for Refusing	Ways To Gain Cooperation
Too Busy/We are Calling at an Inconvenient Time	<p>This is the easiest refusal to convert. Give the respondent a choice of times that we can call back, for example, “I’m sorry I called you at an inconvenient time. Would it be better if I called you back (in the evening, morning, etc. or on the weekend)?</p> <p>Make sure the respondent knows that we have evening and weekend hours and that we can conduct the interview in segments.</p>
Misunderstanding of the Purpose of the Call/Thinks We are Selling Something/Says He is not Interested	Reinforce the name of the sponsor of the study/stress that we are not selling anything or soliciting funds.
Hostility Toward the Interviewer	Listen carefully in a neutral manner to the reasons the respondent is giving for refusing, appeal to the respondent’s pride by telling him his input is important to the subject matter of the study.
Invasion of Privacy	Assure respondent that all information we gather is confidential, that all persons that are associated with the data are bound by law to a promise of confidentiality.
Suspicious/Fearful About Study, Subject Matter, or the Way We Will Use the Data	Give more information about the subject matter, reinforce the name of the sponsor of the study, offer the toll-free number, allow respondent to speak to a supervisor.
Suspicious of Legitimacy of the Call	Reinforce the name of the sponsor of the study, allow respondent to speak to a supervisor.
Respondent Hangs up Without Saying Anything	You really don’t know the reason for the refusal/ it could be any of the other reasons listed. The way you deliver the study introduction to the respondent will lessen some of these types of refusals. We’ll talk about effective ways to “hook “ the respondent’s interest by using your voice and the way you express yourself as tools later on.