

Article 43 Joint Study Hybrid Focus Group/Mailer Survey

-- Answers to Methodological Questions --

prepared for

**U.S. Postal Service/U.S. State Department/
Postal Rate Commission**

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1. How were the individuals selected for the in-depth interviews?

There were two sets of in-depth interviews in this project – one-on-one interviews conducted at the project’s outset and focus groups with mailers during the survey.

In the first phase, 12 in-depth exploratory interviews were completed in March and April, 2001. The individuals interviewed were selected from candidate organizations assembled by the survey sponsors and our own understanding of the domestic and international mailer community. The individuals were top officials or executives from a variety of organizations as shown in the chart below.

Respondent Type	#
Corporate/institutional mail decision-makers	5
Postal wholesalers/consolidators	4
Foreign postal administration officials	2
Trade organization expert	1
Total	12

Within each category, particularly the corporate and institutional mail decision-makers and postal wholesalers and consolidators, we attempted to interview a mix of respondents in terms of company size, mail volume (all being large domestic and some international mailers), users of third-party vendors/suppliers, and the like. In short, many of the individuals were “handpicked” based on their knowledge and influence in the world-wide mailing community since we wanted to explore many topics related to the current and future impact of Article 43.

During the mailer survey, five focus groups were convened, as shown in the chart below, to delve more deeply into the underlying reasons why mailers responded as they did to the mailer survey. These groups were convened in New York and Chicago where there was sufficient concentration of mailers to hold such groups. There were between five and seven respondents present at each group, all of whom had or were in the process of completing the Web survey.

Mail Type	Chicago	New York
First-Class Mail	x	x
Standard A Mail	x	x
Periodicals Mail	---	x
Total	2	3

We identified potential respondents for these focus groups (in New York and Chicago) from the CBCIS frame provided to us and responses to the survey. We telephoned them and those able to attend on the days set for the focus group sessions did so.

2. How much time did it take respondents on average to complete the survey questionnaire?

Based upon pretests conducted during the development of the survey questionnaire, we estimated that the Web survey would require between 45 and 60 minutes to complete if it were completed from start to finish in one sitting without any interruptions.

It should be noted that during the actual on-line administration it was possible for respondents to stop and start the interview, and, of course, leave the interview running on their computer screens. Because we measured total elapsed time for which respondents had the survey open on their Internet browser, estimating a meaningful average length is somewhat difficult. We know from discussions, phone calls and the like that many respondents left the survey "open" for several hours while they were working or collecting relevant information about volume, use of third-party consolidators, and the like.

Among those with a total elapsed time of 90 minutes or less, the average was 52 minutes.

3. How could survey respondents get assistance while responding to the questionnaire?

As noted in the revised technical documentation, potential respondents were telephoned, screened, and, if eligible, were invited to participate in the survey. Those who consented to participate were sent an email, fax, or letter, depending upon their preference, describing the survey and providing them with the email link to the Web survey, instructions for completing the survey, and their user name and password. That communication provided a toll-free number and designated contacts at National Analysts should any questions or concerns arise.

Once respondents logged on to the survey, there were two ways to obtain assistance. One was to call the toll-free number and speak with the Group Operations Director or Assistant Project Manager assigned to this project. In this case, the Group Operations Director is an individual who had performed similar functions for many postal and non-postal projects and is extremely knowledgeable about our Web survey software in general and the questionnaire for this survey in particular. The second way to obtain assistance was through subsequent email communications with our office.

The telephone assistance line was staffed between normal business hours (9:00 to 5:00) Monday through Friday east coast time. However, during the intensive data collection period, we made certain that an individual was available at least until 7:00 PM. In the event that the telephone line was busy or the appropriate individuals were not available to answer questions voice mail messages could be left. Routinely, the Operations Director assigned to the project would check voice mail during nights and weekends and contact respondents very shortly after they called in with questions or problems.

In summary, every effort was made to be responsive to respondents throughout the data collection period. We did not want to lose any interview because of potential difficulties with the software or confusion about the intent of the questions.

4. How many of the 415 respondents completed the questionnaire?

All 415 respondents completed the on-line survey questionnaire. Responses from these individuals were used in the analysis. As noted in the revised documentation submitted separately, 1,130 CATI screened eligible respondents were invited to take the on-line survey. Of these, 433 respondents completed the survey. (An additional 25 from the sample set aside for the focus groups also completed the survey for a total of 458 respondents overall.)

During the editing and cleaning processes, the survey responses from 43 respondents were deleted because upon further inspection and callbacks it was determined that they were not eligible for the survey - their location's mail volume did not reach or exceed the 300,000 piece minimum.

It should be noted that some of the 415 respondents included in the data analysis reported on more than one mail class. (Depending upon a respondent's responsibilities, he/she could report on up to two mail classes.) Thus, 534 mail class responses formed the basis of many of the analyses - 199 First-Class, 244 Standard A, and 91 Periodicals Mail.

5. *What was the follow-up procedure for partial or inappropriate responses?*

We undertook several activities during the course of the data collection and data preparation stages of this project that ensured that the survey results were complete and accurate. The steps we followed for partial and inappropriate responses are described below. These are also included in the revised technical documentation.

- *Partial Responses*

As noted in the revised documentation, potential survey locations were screened by telephone to determine if they were eligible and, if so, to identify the appropriate respondent for interview. Eligible respondents who agreed initially to participate in the on-line survey were sent an e-mail, fax, or letter depending upon their preference confirming their participation and giving them the necessary information for accessing the web survey. Because the data collection period was confined to a period of 33 days and we wanted to make certain that we achieved the targeted number of interviews (approximately 400 to 450 respondents and 500 mail class responses), reminder contacts were initiated a few days after the confirmations had been sent.

Respondents who had begun, but not yet completed, the survey were sent a (e-mail or fax) letter reminding them of the importance of completing the survey, offering a bonus honorarium for completion by the deadline, and giving them instructions for how to log back on to the website to complete the survey. Respondents who had not yet begun the survey within several weeks of recruitment were also notified and reminded of their agreement to participate, offered a bonus honorarium for completing the survey by the deadline, and instructed how to access the survey.

- *Inappropriate Responses*

Once collected, the screening and survey data were subjected to a rigorous set of electronic and manual checks. The screening data were run through an electronic cleaning program which verified that the skip patterns and consistency checks built into the program were working correctly. The result of call codes were compared against the screening question responses to ensure accurate coding. Moreover, additional checks were undertaken to ensure that the screening file downloaded to National Analysts had not been corrupted in the transmission process.

The survey data were also run through numerous electronic cleaning programs that verified the questionnaire responses and checked for logic, internal

consistency, and reasonableness. Because so many questions were quantitative in nature and the potential for over- and under-estimating amounts could occur, we performed a series of unweighted outlier checks. Separate frequency distributions were produced for every quantitative variable in the questionnaire. These distributions were analyzed and an outlier boundary was designated for each variable at either three standard deviations from the mean or some other more restrictive value. All respondents whose answers fell very close to or above the established boundary were flagged for inspection and callbacks, if necessary. A complete printout of each respondent's answers (with the suspect questions flagged) was produced. Each printout was inspected and selected respondents were recontacted if examination was insufficient. Callbacks were completed with approximately 150 respondents. During this process, 43 questionnaires were voided because the location volumes had been overstated, and these locations were no longer eligible for the survey.

6. *Please confirm that 13,924 is the universe (estimated eligible population).*

Please refer to the answer to Question 7 following.

7. Was a sample selected from the universe (i.e., target population) to conduct the mailer survey? If so, what was the sample size for the study?

The revised technical documentation provides a complete description of the CBCIS file which constituted the universe for this study and from which the sample was drawn. As indicated, the original CBCIS extract contained 408,713 unique locations (i.e., sites) with active permits in the appropriate mail classes. After truncating the extract to consider only those locations above the 300,000-piece volume threshold and excluding locations in Alaska, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico, there were 22,953 locations available to be surveyed. Not all of them had telephone numbers. After sending them to Telematch, we had 18,802 locations with telephone numbers available for the study. Of these, 385 were set aside for focus group recruiting and the remaining numbers (n = 18,417) were given to the centralized data collection facility for potential use in the telephone screenings.

After the screenings had been completed and eligibility rates were determined within strata, it is estimated that the eligible population is 13,924 business locations. More details about the sampling, screening, and weighting processes can be found in the revised technical documentation.

8. *If available, please provide the final weights for the respondents?*

Please see the weighting discussion included in the revised technical documentation.

9. What was the response rate for the mailer survey? Please provide the associated ratio.

A number of different response rates can be calculated for this study. To that end, the revised technical documentation provides a complete enumeration of the final result of call codes for the screenings and interviews. A copy of that table is included here.

Final Result of Call Codes - Screenings/Interviews

Dispositions	Summary	Final Disposition
Total # Available	18,417	
Not attempted		2,301
Total # Attempted (at least once)	16,116	
Callbacks scheduled/in progress		5,408
No answers, busy, left message		3,485
Refusals		2,416
Not business working numbers (fax, residences, disconnects)		546
Non-working numbers		511
Not available during field period		247
Language problems		33
Started Screening		3,470
Total # Location Screener Started/Not Completed	1,017	
Wrong business		203
Undetermined eligibility		814
Total # Location Screener Completed	2,453	
Ineligible location		1,007
Eligible location		1,446
Total # Attempted to Find Eligible Respondent for Web Survey	1,446	
Referral in progress		116
Refused		84
No Internet access		27
Invited to take survey		1,219
Total # Invited to Take Web Survey	1,219	
Refused		89
Agreed		1,130
Total # Did Not Access Web Survey At All	437	
Total # Partially Completed Web Survey	260	
Ineligible (insufficient volume)		105
Stopped before/during Section II		108
Stopped during Section III		47
Total # Completed Web Survey*	458	
Voided interviews		43
Interviews used in the analysis		415

* Includes 433 from CATI screening plus 25 individuals recruited from focus group list. (Note: One questionnaire was subsequently voided, leaving 24 in the analysis.)

10. *Please provide an analytical expression (including the statistical assumptions) of the remail impact model described in Appendix 6.*

Please see revised technical documentation for the answer to this question. Note that National Analysts did not develop the RIM model. Rather, we provided a market simulator from the conjoint results that was used as one input of the model. The conjoint design, estimating parameters, and results are described in the revised documentation.

11. *Please provide an analytical expression for each of the principle estimators associated with the mailer survey.*

Please see revised technical documentation for the answer to this question.

12. How was the information from the focus groups and expert panel incorporated into the final estimates?

Information from the focus groups conducted during the mailer survey was used qualitatively to understand more fully why some respondents would elect to use remail and others would not if Article 43 prohibitions were eliminated. Similarly, the insights gleaned from the expert panelists were used qualitatively by National Analysts and not formally incorporated into the conjoint model or market simulator.

It is our understanding, however, that some specific inputs received from the expert panelists regarding the time horizon for adoption of remail and certain costing parameters may have been used in the RIM model. As such, other members of the joint study team and the survey sponsors are in a better position to comment on the use of the expert panel insights.