Survey Research Laboratory (MC 336)
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RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT

The University of Illinois at Chicago

The University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) is Chicago's largest university with 27,000 students, 12,000 faculty and staff, 15 colleges and the state's major public medical center. A hallmark of the campus is the Great Cities Commitment, through which UIC faculty, students, and staff engage with community, corporate, foundation, and government partners in hundreds of programs to improve the quality of life in metropolitan areas around the world.

With annual research expenditures exceeding $463 million, UIC ranks among the top 50 of more than 650 universities in federal research funding. Its students reflect the global character of Chicago; more than a third speak English as a second language, and 65% of undergraduates and 35% of graduate and professional students belong to ethnic minority groups.

Occupying more than 100 buildings on approximately 240 acres just west of downtown Chicago, the UIC offers 74 bachelor's, 77 master's and 60 doctoral degree programs. The UIC medical campus resides in the Illinois Medical District, one of the world's largest concentrations of advanced public and private health care facilities.

The university serves as Illinois's principal educator of physicians, dentists, pharmacists, nurses, and other health care professionals. About one in six physicians in the state is a graduate of the UIC College of Medicine, the nation's largest medical school. One in three Illinois pharmacists is a graduate of the UIC College of Pharmacy, and more than one third of the state's dentists are graduates of UIC College of Dentistry. UIC offers more graduate study in dentistry, medicine, nursing, pharmacy, applied health sciences, and public health than any other health education institution in the nation.

Survey Research Laboratory

The Survey Research Laboratory (SRL) of the University of Illinois at Chicago is a research and service unit established in 1964. It is a division of the University of Illinois at Chicago's College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs that provides survey research services to the faculty, staff, and students of the University of Illinois at Chicago and Urbana-Champaign; other academic institutions; local, state, and federal agencies; and others working in the public interest. SRL has offices on the Chicago and Urbana-Champaign campuses of the University and can undertake complete survey projects from initial study design through data analysis and report writing. SRL's staff also can provides support and assistance for specific portions of survey work such

as sampling, questionnaire design, focus groups, data collection, instrument programming, and data reduction and can provide consultation on survey problems on a fee-for-service basis. SRL's staff also can provide professional development workshops (both in-person and via virtual webinars) on a variety of aspects of survey research, including overall design, budgeting, questionnaire design, sampling, and analysis.

Almost since its inception, SRL has had major ongoing programs in survey methodology. In recent years, SRL's methodological research has focused on cognition; response effects; respondent selection; questionnaire design and interviewing techniques for collecting hard-to-obtain data; validity of self-reported data; and improved techniques for face-to-face, mail, and telephone surveys, particularly for surveys on sensitive topics and with special populations. Over the past decade, SRL also has developed methodological interests in cross-cultural sources of survey measurement error and the unique challenges of conducting social surveys in urbanized environments. The majority of this research has been carried out in the area of health, reflecting the interests and expertise of the senior research staff.

SRL routinely employs cognitive assessment methodologies to improve the quality of the survey instruments fielded at SRL. In addition, SRL has for several decades maintained a Questionnaire Review Committee (QRC) charged with conducting formal evaluations of all survey instruments to be fielded. QRC is responsible for insuring that all questionnaires constructed by SRL conform to the highest professional and ethical standards.

Since its inception, SRL has been involved in over 1,200 projects, collecting data through telephone and face-to-face interviews and mail, Web-based, and other self-administered questionnaires. A field staff of interviewers is available for face-to-face interview surveys in the Chicago metropolitan area, and supervisory personnel have been sent to sampling points throughout the United States either to conduct interviews or to hire, train, and supervise local interviewers. The Laboratory maintains a telephone interviewing facility in Chicago. SRL collects survey interviews via computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI), computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI), and audio computer-assisted self interviews (ACASI), using CASES software, developed at the University of California, Berkeley. For its Web-based surveys, SRL utilizes Survey Gizmo, Qualtrics or CASES.

SRL employs survey specialists in sampling, data collection, data reduction, and data processing. It has a staff of project coordinators from various disciplines to direct and conduct entire surveys. The full SRL staff complement, excluding interviewers and hourly employees, is 11 survey research professionals.

At SRL, separate sections have been established corresponding to the major phases of a survey project: Sampling and Analysis, Field (data collection), and Data Reduction. These sections have the primary responsibility for implementing their respective phases of a survey. The Office of Survey Systems coordinates the computer programming demands of SRL's survey operations. In addition, a project coordinator is assigned to each project to coordinate the activities of the technical specialists in the sections and to provide additional technical expertise. The staff members assigned to each project work as a team to conduct the project according to the overall goals and specifications provided by the client.

Project coordinators at SRL are experts in study design, project management, questionnaire construction, and analysis. They provide the major link between project sponsors and SRL section staff members. Under the project coordinator's guidance, a survey passes through all the component phases from design and budgeting to analysis and report writing.

The Sampling and Analysis Section has the experience and capability of employing the most sophisticated sampling procedures and executing complex sample designs. This section is responsible for maintaining related statistical analysis software that is necessary for the appropriate analysis of survey data collected using complex sampling designs, as well as the software necessary to conduct advanced quantitative analyses of survey data (i.e., structural equation modeling, hierarchical linear modeling, random effects regression).

The Field Section is responsible for implementing all interviewing conducted by SRL. Telephone interviewing is done during the evenings, on weekends, and, when appropriate, during the daytime from SRL's main telephone facility in the Chicago office. Although traditional paper-and-pencil methods are

possible, most telephone interviewing is conducted via SRL's customized CATI system. The Field Section emphasizes strict quality control standards throughout all phases of the data collection process.

The Data Reduction (DR) Section employs student workers who prepare mail surveys as well as edit and code data for those questionnaires. In addition, DR staff employ CASES programming for data entry of paper instruments. Quality control procedures also are emphasized during all phases of data reduction. In recent years, DR has also developed high proficiency in the behavior coding of most verbal and nonverbal respondent-interviewer interactions.

SRL's Office of Survey Systems (OSS) works with the computer-related aspects of interviewing. OSS contributes to the design and programming of software to schedule, screen, track, and conduct CATI interviews. Data entry programs (with range and inter-item consistency checks) are prepared for paper-and-pencil studies. Upon completion of data collection, staff members produce and run cleaning programs on closed-ended variables and produce composite variables as necessary. They also produce standardized documentation and, if requested, SAS, STATA, or SPSS program setups to facilitate analysis.

SRL's computer network system is under the University of Illinois at Chicago network domain. Users logon to the SRL network through the university authentication system using the user's NetID and password. SRL has two Windows 2008 R2 servers that hold shared data files for both the Chicago and Urbana-Champaign offices. Two Windows 2003 R2 servers are dedicated to serve as Internet Web Survey servers. The Internet Web server and Intranet Web server provide survey research related information to public and internal staff. All servers in SRL are configured with firewall protection and the latest security patches from Microsoft; they also are protected with Symantec Virus protection software. Data files on all SRL servers are backed up daily by the university ADSM backup system.

For additional information and the latest news about SRL, visit www.srl.uic.edu.

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