

Data Manual

Data Manual

for the Survey of the Legal Needs of the Public

Barbara A. Curran

and

Katherine J. Rosich

Chicago

American Bar Foundation

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The purpose of this document is to encourage the use of the data base created from the Survey of the Legal Needs of the Public. Whenever information is used either from this document or from the data files, we request an acknowledgment along the following lines:

The raw data on which (these analyses/this report/these observations) are based were provided by the American Bar Foundation and were derived from a survey undertaken by the Foundation in collaboration with the American Bar Association Special Committee to Survey Legal Needs. The survey is reported in Barbara A. Curran, *The Legal Needs of the Public: The Final Report of a National Survey* (Chicago: American Bar Foundation, 1977). The description of the data files and the index to their contents are set forth in Barbara A. Curran and Katherine J. Rosich, *Data Manual for the Survey of the Legal Needs of the Public* (Chicago: American Bar Foundation, 1980).

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Data Manual

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FOREWORD

One of the major research projects of the American Bar Foundation in recent years has been the Survey of the Legal Needs of the Public conducted in cooperation with the American Bar Association Special Committee to Survey Legal Needs. The survey has produced extensive data on the legal problems encountered by members of the public, the extent to which people seek help in solving those problems, the experiences they have had with lawyers, and their attitudes about the law and lawyers. The mine of data is so rich that it deserves much fuller exploitation than was possible in the two books so far published by the Foundation.

The American Bar Foundation intends on its own account to pursue the investigation of this information for some time into the future. But there is too much material to be utilized by the Foundation alone. Nor is it desirable that all mapping of the terrain be done from a single perspective. Partly in the hope that it will encourage others to undertake independent analyses of this rich data base, or parts of it, the Foundation is publishing this detailed guide to the data.

Spencer L. Kimball
Executive Director

PREFACE

This manual describes the data files created from the Survey of the Legal Needs of the Public. The results of the initial analysis of the data contained in these files are presented in Barbara A. Curran, *The Legal Needs of the Public: The Final Report of a National Survey* (Chicago: American Bar Foundation, 1977). Although the author continues to analyze these data, the scope and magnitude of the underlying information base make it desirable to encourage secondary analyses by other scholars. To make such efforts possible, we have created this manual, in which the scope and content of the information base created by the survey are described, the coding scheme developed to record that information is explained, an index to the variables that constitute the data files is provided, and the range and descriptions of the code applicable to each such variable are presented.

We have made every reasonable effort to minimize errors in the preparation and production of this document. To this end, we stored the first draft of chapters 1, 2, and 4-6 on computer disk and thereafter did all checking, editing, revising, and formatting on the disk using the SUPERWYLBUR text editor and SCRIPT program at the University of Chicago Computation Center. The percentage distributions, variable descriptions, and value labels presented in chapter 7 were also entered on disk from an SPSS program and were then reformatted using the FILEBOL program and further edited with SUPERWYLBUR. Both files were then transferred from disk to magnetic tape for direct conversion to the printed format.

The work of many people contributed to the creation of the final data files described in this manual, and their efforts are acknowledged in the report cited above. We want to express here our special thanks to those persons at the American Bar Foundation who have been involved in the development and production of the manual itself. Clara N. Carson, Technical Services Director, who has participated in this study from its inception and has had primary responsibility for managing the systems files used in the data analysis, has provided invaluable counsel and assistance throughout the preparation of this manual. Phyllis Satkus, Technical Services Director, offered comments and encouragement throughout the development of the manual. Ann Jung Shenassa, Research Assistant, both contributed valuable ideas and diligently applied computer editing principles to the text; she and Roberta Gutman, Editor, have worked tirelessly to ensure the quality and reliability of the materials presented in this manual. James A. Sprowl, Research Attorney, also gave generously in ideas and in support of developing this manual on a computer-based system. Constance Schroeder, Project Secretary, together with Sheila Schneider, Joanne Watson, and A. Darryl Beck, have devoted many

Preface

hours to making the presentation of information attractive and readily usable. We also wish to thank Bette Sikes, Director of Publications, for her counsel, patience, and support throughout this work. Finally, we express our special appreciation to our social science colleagues, Felice J. Levine and Dorothy Linder Maddi, for their helpful suggestions, criticisms, and continuous support throughout this enterprise.

Barbara A. Curran
Katherine J. Rosich

INTRODUCTION

This manual presents a full and detailed description of the data collected in a national survey inquiring into the legal needs of the adult population of the United States. Its purpose is to make available a complete statement of the data base created from this survey and to serve as a manual for those who are interested in examining and analyzing these data further.

The survey was a joint undertaking of the American Bar Foundation and the American Bar Association Committee to Survey Legal Needs. The study was carried out by the American Bar Foundation research staff under the direction of Barbara A. Curran. Arrangements were made with the National Opinion Research Center to draw the sample and conduct the fieldwork. The report of the survey results was published in December 1977.¹

In addition to discussing the purposes of the study, the survey report describes the survey plan and its implementation, the development and contents of the questionnaire, the sample design, the representativeness of the obtained sample, and the reliability and precision of the survey results.

This manual supplements the survey report by explaining the procedures followed to create the data files and by setting forth the contents of these files. The underlying coding system and its implementation are explained. A complete description of the variables comprising these files is presented together with distributions of responses for all major variables. Reference should be made to the table of contents for a detailed outline of this manual.

The data files are stored on magnetic tape. Persons interested in acquiring a copy of the tape together with appropriate documentation should address inquiries to:

Technical Services Department
American Bar Foundation
1155 East 60th Street
Chicago, Illinois 60637

1. Barbara A. Curran, *The Legal Needs of the Public: The Final Report of a National Survey* (Chicago: American Bar Foundation, 1977). Pp. xxxvi+382.

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CHAPTER 1 **DESCRIPTION OF THE SAMPLE**

The target population for the survey was the resident population of the continental United States, excluding persons under 18 years of age or not living in households. After the precision afforded by different sample sizes was evaluated, it was decided that an obtained sample of approximately 2,000 respondents would provide an acceptable level of precision for this study. The following sections describe the sample design, its implementation, and the obtained sample.¹

1.1 THE SAMPLE DESIGN

The sampling scheme was a full probability sample of the population at large for which the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) used its 1972 national probability sample, the following description of which is presented with the permission of NORC.

The NORC national probability sample was a stratified, multistage, area probability sample of clusters of households in the continental United States. The selection of geographic areas at successive stages was made in accordance with the method of probabilities proportional to size (pps). Furthermore, the clusters of households were divided into replicated subsamples to facilitate estimation of the variance of sample estimators of population characteristics.

At the first stage of selection, Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas (SMSAs) and nonmetropolitan counties covering the total continental United States were grouped according to size strata within the nine U.S. Census regions. All population figures and other demographic information were obtained from 1970 Census reports. Within each size stratum, grouping based on geographic location or racial characteristics (or both) was accomplished before selection. The final frame was further separated into zones, or "paper strata," of equal population size to facilitate the selection of replicated subsamples of primary sampling units (PSUs). The selection methods used were similar to those described in standard textbooks.²

The selection of PSUs was designed to produce four independent subsamples of equal size. The four subsamples were randomly combined to form two larger subsamples of 101 PSUs each. The large subsamples were thus internally separable into two replicated subsamples for purposes of variance estimation. NORC selected one of the two large subsamples

1. For elaboration of the matters discussed in this chapter, see Barbara A. Curran, *The Legal Needs of the Public* 32-41 (Chicago: American Bar Foundation, 1977).

2. E.g., W. E. Deming, *Sample Design in Business Research* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1960); L. Kish, *Survey Sampling* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1965).

described above to serve as its principal frame of households for the remainder of the decade. The PSUs fall into 89 distinct SMSAs and nonmetropolitan counties. (New York, a very large SMSA, represents five PSUs, whereas the smaller counties represent only one PSU.) The set of SMSAs and counties in the NORC household frame is shown in the List of Primary Sampling Units set forth in section 1.5.

The second-stage procedure involved the direct selection of Census block groups or enumeration districts within SMSAs or counties, thus eliminating the traditional intermediate stage of clustering selections within urban places or county divisions. Before selection, the Census tracts, minor civil divisions, and Census county divisions containing the block groups and enumeration districts were carefully stratified by geographic location, income, and race to maximize the precision of sample estimation within a PSU. Block groups and enumeration districts were then selected with probabilities proportional to size in numbers sufficient to satisfy survey demands for households expected throughout the decade.

The third stage consisted of the creation of subareas, or "segments," of about 100 households each. If any second-stage block group or enumeration district was considerably larger than 100 households, it was subdivided into segments and one segment was selected on a random basis. If a block group or enumeration district had about 100 households, the entire block group or enumeration district became the segment.

The fourth stage involved the selection of households at which interviews were to be obtained. These were probabilistically selected within each segment, with the number being determined by the size of the sample and the actual number of households in that segment.

At each step the probabilities of selection were predetermined; thus the probability of selecting any segment and, from it, any individual household was known. The outcome of this process was therefore a straight random sample of households in which each household had a predetermined and equal probability of appearing in the sample.

1.2 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SAMPLE DESIGN

NORC assigned 3,004 addresses from listings of dwelling units in the sampled segments. It was estimated that this number would produce the desired sample size of about 2,000 completed interviews. The next step was for interviewers to canvass the assigned addresses to determine the total number of eligible households. This enumeration process resulted in the reduction of the 3,004 assigned lines to 2,678, and this figure became the net sample of households in which interviews were to be obtained.

Interviewers were instructed to conduct a screening interview for each of the 2,678 households (see Household Enumeration Folder reproduced in chap. 3). Information obtained included the total number of persons in the household, the age and sex of each member, and each member's relationship to the head of the household. The person to whom the full questionnaire was to be administered in each household was then selected on a random basis from household members who were at least 18 years of age at the time of the survey. For this purpose the interviewer was provided with specific instructions and a predetermined procedure for designating the eligible respondent.

1.3 THE OBTAINED SAMPLE

Screening interviews were obtained for 2,367 households and full interviews with eligible respondents in 2,064 households. Table 1.1 shows the disposition of the net sample.

TABLE 1.1

<i>Disposition of Net Sample</i>	<i>No. of Households</i>	<i>%</i>
Completed cases	2,064	77.1
Refusals ^a	445	16.6
Broke off interview	12	0.4
Unavailable ^b	40	1.5