
APPENDIX B - PROFILE OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS

The goal of the Des Moines Services Satisfaction survey was to collect information on the 12 issue areas as identified in the Des Moines Strategic Plan. The collected information then would be used to assess and improve the city's services based on the interests and needs of all city residents.

Based on the statistical methodology articulated in Appendix A and as implemented, we can make certain inferences about the total population from the survey data. However, these inferences are based on statistical accuracy only and provide little explanation of any bias that may arise from the nature of the sample. To assist in understanding sample bias we can compare the data collected from this survey to data from the 2000 Census of Population to determine if and in what respects a biased sample was generated.

Whenever possible, comparisons are made between the survey data and information from the 2000 Census for Des Moines to estimate the accuracy of the survey data. Survey figures include adult residents only (18 years and older), as they were the target population for the survey.

GENDER

Fifty-four percent of the survey respondents were male, and 46 percent female. The census reports that 48 percent of Des Moines residents over 18 years are male and 52 percent female. As the proportion of males among the survey respondents was 6 percentage points above the census figure and 6 percentage points below for females, the survey results are slightly biased in the direction of males' perceptions.

MARITAL STATUS

Sixty-six percent of the respondents were married, compared to the census figure of 51 percent. With only 10 percent of the survey respondents being single, while the census shows that 28 percent are single, the survey bias is toward married participants. The survey percentage reporting that they were living without a spouse or partner is quite close to the census figure, so no bias is evident in the results of this survey either for or against those living without a spouse or partner.

AGE

The census-reported median age of Des Moines residents, rounded to the nearest whole number, is 34 years; for males the median age is 33 years and for females, 35 years. Although the data for age in the survey were collected according to age group, rather than by actual years of age at the last birthday, and thus a direct comparison based on age cannot be conducted, the survey respondents were noticeably older than the median age of the population would suggest.

Among the survey respondents, the percentages in each age group are quite different from the percentages reported in the 2000 census. For example, the 2000 census reports that while 14 percent of the Des Moines population is in the youngest age group (18 to 24 years old for this survey), only one percent of the survey respondents were in that same age group. At the other end of the age spectrum, that is, for the oldest group of participants (ages 65 and older), the 2000 census reports that 16 percent of the population was in that age group, whereas 30 percent of responses to this survey were from people in the 65+ age group.

AGE DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSEHOLD RESIDENTS

The incidence of respondents' households with one or more residents age 18 and under was 30 percentage points *less* than the number reported in the 2000 census (Table 2). In contrast, the percentage of respondents' household residents aged 19 to 64 years was nearly double the percentage for that age group reported in the 2000 census (57 percent, compared to 29 percent). These results show a strong bias of survey results in the direction of households with older respondents. The difference between the sample and the population in the percentages of household residents 65 and older is small; the survey results thus seem to provide an accurate reflection of the presence of households with elderly residents. These findings are supported by survey responses showing that only 19 percent of the household population is school-aged.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

The educational attainment percentages indicate that survey respondents generally have higher levels of educational attainment than the general Des Moines population. For example, the 2000 census reports that 23 percent of the population had completed some college, while 28 percent of the survey respondents had

completed some college. Further, 15 percent of the survey respondents, compared to 7 percent of the census population, had completed advanced degrees, such as a Master's or a doctorate. From this, we can generally assume that the participants represent a better-educated group than the general Des Moines adult population.

HOUSEHOLD INCOME

There is a high degree of similarity between reported household income from the 2000 Census and the income values reported in the survey. This degree of similarity indicates that the survey is fairly accurate in terms of respondents' income. The median Census income for Des Moines (\$38,408) and the average income of respondents (\$47,024) both fall within the \$20,000 - \$49,999 bracket that contains the highest percentage of survey respondents.

HOMEOWNERSHIP

Survey results are biased strongly toward homeowners. The 2000 census reports a 65 percent homeownership rate for Des Moines, and 98 percent of survey respondents reported they were homeowners. Only one percent of the survey respondents reported living in rental housing; in contrast, the 2000 census reported a city rental rate of 35 percent.

TIME LIVING IN DES MOINES

Fourteen percent of the survey respondents have lived in Des Moines 10 years or less. Another 14 percent have lived in the area between 11 and 20 years. The largest share of respondents, 39 percent, have lived in Des Moines more than 20 years, with an additional 33 percent who have lived in Des Moines all their lives.

HOUSING PLANS AND INTENT TO MOVE

Sixty-nine percent of the survey respondents have no plans to change their current housing in the next three years. In addition, 63 percent reported that they plan to live in Des Moines for at least the next 10 years. Combined with the length of time that the survey respondents report having lived in Des Moines, responses to these components of the survey indicate that the respondents represent a settled segment of the population, with probably greater familiarity with the Des Moines environment than would be true for a more transient element of the city's population.

REASONS FOR LIVING IN DES MOINES

The survey results reveal the three top reasons why respondents report they live in Des Moines. The most frequent response was employment (35%). This is followed closely by those reporting having lived in

Des Moines all their lives (31%). The third most frequent response was because of family or friends either in or near Des Moines. Only 6 percent identified education as a reason to be in Des Moines, and, at 4 percent, affordable housing was the least frequently chosen reason why participants chose to live in Des Moines.

UNEMPLOYMENT

Three percent of survey respondents reported that they were unemployed. Over several months adjacent to and during survey administration, the U.S. Department of Labor has documented the unemployment rate for Des Moines to be between 2.9-3.2 percent.¹ These figures suggest that the unemployment rate among survey respondents accurately reflects the contemporary unemployment rate of Des Moines.

NATURE OF EMPLOYMENT

Sixty-two percent of the survey respondents reported that they were wage earners, and 66 percent reported that their partner or spouse was a wage or salaried employee.

SUMMARY

So, who are the respondents? They are a select group of citizens that in several ways does not typify the general population

when compared to the 2000 census figures for Des Moines. The survey respondents were mostly male, married, homeowners, older (45 years or more), and have attained a higher level of education (4-year college degree or more) than the general city population. Household income levels of the respondents were very close to those reported in the census.

Generally, the respondents represent two-income families and have lived in Des Moines for 20 years or more (this includes some people who have lived in Des Moines all their lives). Most of the respondents (63%) also plan on living in Des Moines for an additional 10 or more years. Respondents are here mostly because of employment, but they also are here because of family and friends or just have been in Des Moines all their lives.

As the survey profile differs from the Census information, the responses may not be representative of the general population. Perhaps with this information in mind, it may be worthwhile to use a different sampling frame in the future to acquire a sample of persons or households more representative of the general population.

¹U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics for Des Moines, Iowa http://www.bls.gov/eag/eag.ia_desmoines.htm

Des Moines Metropolitan Statistical Area – Sources: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis 2000; ACCRADataNow 2000; http://www.desmoinesmetro.com/profiles/profiles_msa.html

Midwest Profiles, Data for Des Moines: http://www.silo.lib.ia.us/specialized_services/datacenter/browse/decennial.html#Income. *Household Income, Median Household Income and Mean Household Income in 1999 by Tenure for Iowa and its Incorporated Places 2000.*

Local Area Unemployment Statistics as of October 2002 - U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics: <http://data.bls.gov/servlet/SurveyOutputServlet>; Unemployment Rates for States - U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics: <http://stats.bls.gov/web/laumstrk.htm>