

Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) Survey Response Rate Policy

Updated April 14, 2017

This Commute Trip Reduction Survey Response Rate Policy describes the population worksites should be surveying and the minimum survey response that will be considered acceptable for program compliance and measurement.

Purpose of this policy

The purpose of this policy is to achieve consistently high survey response rates so we are relatively confident that the survey data we collect is representative of actual worksite travel behavior. The Commute Trip Reduction program and the state legislature that funds the program need reliable performance measurement data. When too few employees complete the worksite survey, there is a higher risk of self-selection bias, and we have less confidence that the survey results are representative of the entire worksite. Self-selection bias means that the survey results from those who completed the survey may differ from the commuting behavior of the worksite as a whole.

Survey return rate policy

With this policy, WSDOT establishes or updates the following requirements for surveys:

1. For worksites surveying all employees:
 - a. For their baseline survey, worksites have the choice between surveying all employees and surveying only the CTR affected employees. Once this decision has been made about which population (i.e., all or only CTR affected) will be surveyed, each additional biannual survey needs to be administered to the same population at the worksite.
 - b. Worksites should strive to collect completed surveys from at least 70 percent of surveyed employees.
 - c. Worksites must achieve a minimum survey response rate of 50 percent.
 - d. Worksites not achieving a minimum survey response rate of 50 percent will be required to re-survey within the same two-year survey cycle period and achieve a 50 percent response rate.
 - e. Surveys with a response rate of less than 50 percent will be excluded from our measurement database, except as follows:
 - i. When a worksite does not meet the 50 percent threshold after both an original and a second survey, there is an appeal process to allow for potential inclusion. If a worksite has enough employees that a response rate under 50 percent still leads to a high confidence level, it can be included. Note: This exception is **NOT** to take the place of the steps as described above. Each jurisdiction must show due diligence and a good-faith effort to have their sites considered for inclusion when they do not achieve a 50 percent response rate.
 1. It is the jurisdiction's responsibility to alert WSDOT when they want a site considered for appeal.
 - ii. If there are extenuating circumstances for why a site with lower than a 50 percent response rate should be included, please contact WSDOT to discuss.
2. For worksites conducting sample surveys:
 - a. These worksites will follow WSDOT established guidelines for conducting sample surveys (including minimum and maximum number of surveys to distribute for total employment).
 - b. All other requirements pursuant to section 1.b. through section 1.e. above are also in effect for worksites that conduct sample surveying.
3. For non-CTR surveys (e.g., "Other," "TMP"), no minimum survey response rate is required, although high survey response rates are recommended for these surveys as well.

Background

When a worksite distributes surveys to all employees, the worksite is conducting a “population” or “census” survey. Although it would be ideal to obtain responses from 100 percent of employees, this is unrealistic. Instead, worksites in some jurisdictions continue to experience very low survey response rates. With the original policy statement, the statewide Commute Trip Reduction program office established a minimum response rate that will be acceptable for compliance with surveying requirements. As indicated above, worksites not initially achieving the minimum survey response rate will be required to re-survey.

With the update to this policy, the statewide program office is also establishing an appeal process based on statistical meaningfulness, so larger sites, some of which are notoriously difficult from which to elicit high response rates, are still potentially able to be included. Statistically speaking, the larger a population, the lower the number of respondents necessary to achieve the same confidence level.

Example:

Site A has 100 employees and achieves an 80 percent random response rate.

Site B has 1,000 employees and achieves a 28 percent random response rate.

Both sites have achieved a confidence level of 95 percent with a confidence interval of 5 percent.

Note: As self-selection bias is still a concern for our surveys, we set the parameters of the calculation to err heavily on the side of caution and produce higher required sample sizes. This should help mitigate for the fact that the responses are not completely random.

Sampling

Worksites with 1,000 or more employees are encouraged to consider conducting a sample survey rather than surveying all employees. Contact Michael Wandler at wandlem@wsdot.wa.gov or 206-464-1215 for WSDOT guidance on conducting sample surveys.

Drive Alone Fill-In

The requirement to add drive alone trips was eliminated per the 2013 surveying guide update. Fill-in for low response rates continues to be excluded, and we are striving to remove all mention of it in our guidance, policies, reports, et cetera.

Survey Administration and Response Rates

Online surveys are typically left open for two weeks and rarely longer than a month once surveying begins. If you have a special circumstance for which you need to keep your online survey open for longer than a month to increase your response rate, please contact Amber Nguyen (nguyena@wsdot.wa.gov) to discuss this. Similarly, paper surveys should be collected over two weeks and rarely longer than a month.

For more information

For more information or comments about this policy, please contact Michael Wandler at 206-464-1215, or wandlem@wsdot.wa.gov.