

The 2013 Texas Rural Survey: Respondents' Demographic Profile



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Rural Texas

Of the 25.1 million people living in Texas, 3.8 million (15.3%) live in rural areas.¹ According to the Census Bureau, the land area of Texas is approximately 261,232 square miles, which approaches the area covered by New Mexico, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Louisiana combined. With such a large geographic expanse, much of the population is concentrated in dense urban areas, whereas the 15.3 percent of the population residing in rural areas is spread across 96.7 percent of the state.² Located throughout these rural spaces are a majority of the industrial, agricultural, cultural, and natural resources that drive the state's development and ultimately link urban and rural people and places.

As rural places face the significant social and economic challenges that accompany population decline, it is imperative that researchers work to understand, strengthen, and maintain rural areas. In 2012, the Center for Rural Studies at Sam Houston State University conducted the first Texas Rural Survey. Between August and October 2012, Texas residents from 22 rural places³ were randomly selected to complete a questionnaire. The findings from the study were used to develop a series of summary reports regarding public services and community amenities, public perceptions of urban and rural living, economic development strategies and efforts, medical and healthcare services, and natural disaster issues.

The results from the 2012 survey prompted an interest in a subsequent study. In 2013, the Texas Rural Survey was revised and sent to residents of 22 additional rural Texas places. This report explains the methodology and summarizes the findings from one topical section of the study.

The 2013 Texas Rural Survey

Between June and August 2013, a random sample of 5,608 individuals living in 22 Texas rural places were contacted and asked to participate in the 2013 Texas Rural Survey. This report explains the methodology and summarizes the findings from one topical section of the study.

Methodology

Study Site Selection

In 2010, according to the Texas State Data Center, there were 1,752 places in Texas with 1,511 (86%) of those places having a population of 10,000 or less. Following the methodology used in the 2012 Texas Rural Survey, one place within each of three population categories (499 or fewer, 500-1,999, and 2,000-10,000) was selected as a study site within each of the seven Rural Economic Development Regions as classified by the Texas Department of Agriculture. In addition, because there are a large number of places in the 499 or fewer population category in the West Region, an additional study site was added to the sample. In total, 22 places were randomly selected as study sites (see Appendix). Study sites included both incorporated places (concentrations of

^{1,2} U.S. Census Bureau. 2010a. "2010 Census Urban Lists Record Layouts."
http://www.census.gov/geo/reference/ua/uallists_la_yout.html

³ For our purposes, the term "places" refers to incorporated places and census designated places.

population having legally defined boundaries) and census designated places (concentrations of population that are locally identifiable by name but not legally incorporated).⁴

Data Collection

Following the multiple contact approach of the tailored design method,⁵ standard self-administered mail surveys were distributed to households in the study site locations. In early June 2013, an informational letter was mailed to a stratified random sample of 5,608 households across the 22 study sites. The informational letter, printed in English on one side and Spanish on the other, notified residents that their household had been randomly selected to participate in an upcoming study focused on rural Texas. The letter contained instructions for completing the questionnaire in one of two ways: (1) online at the provided URL, or (2) by returning the mailed questionnaire they would soon receive. Of the selected households, no rejections to participation in the study nor mistaken addresses were identified. Therefore, the final sample size remained at 5,608.

Later in June 2013, the survey questionnaire was mailed to the sampled households. In order to obtain a representative sample of individuals within the households, the cover letter requested that the adult in the household who had most recently celebrated his or her birthday would be the one to complete and return the survey. The 52-item survey questionnaire was offered in English and Spanish as a self-completion booklet and online, and it required approximately 50 minutes to complete. After the initial survey mailing and two follow-up mailings during July and August, 757 completed questionnaires⁶ were returned for a response rate of 13.5 percent.

⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, 2012. "Geography." <http://www.census.gov/geo/index.html>

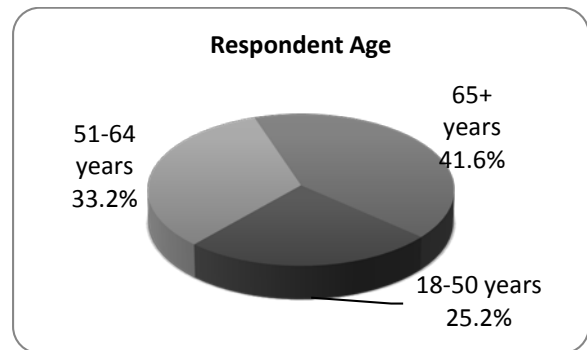
⁵ Dillman, Don A., Jolene D. Smyth, and Leah Melani Christian. 2009. *Internet, Mail, and Mixed-Mode Surveys: The Tailored Design Method*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Demographic Profile

The Texas Rural Survey respondents were asked to report on selected demographic questions/items, including their age, gender, marital status, race, political affiliation, religious service/meeting attendance, and household income. The following sections provide an overview of the respondents' characteristics for the 2013 Texas Rural Survey.

Age

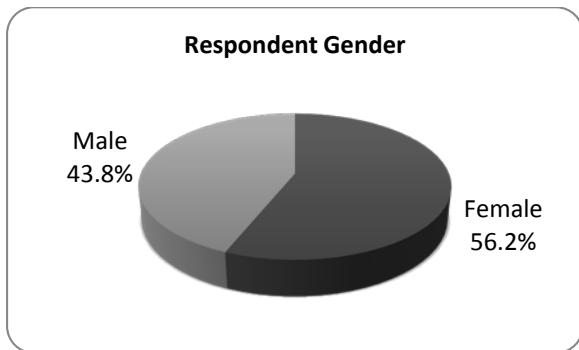
The average age of survey participants was 60. Approximately one quarter of the respondents were between 18 and 50 years of age; roughly a third were between 51 and 64, and 41.6 percent were 65+ years of age.



⁶ One household requested a Spanish mail survey, and one completed the Spanish version online. In total, 701 completed the mail survey and 56 completed the online survey.

Gender

Approximately 56 percent of survey respondents were female and roughly 44 percent were male.



Household Characteristics

Survey participants were asked to record the total number of people living at their residence and within various age groups (5 and under, between 6 and 18, and 65 and over). The average household size of survey participants was 2.41. Most (72%) of the respondents reported no children residing within the household; this is not surprising given the average age of the survey participants. Of the 176 households with children (approximately 28% of survey households), only 64 respondents reported young children (defined as 5 years of age or younger) living in the household. The mean age of the respondents in households with children was 45.5 years, which was significantly younger than the overall average age of respondents (60).

Almost half of survey participants (46.2%) resided in two-person households. A sizeable number of survey respondents (21.8%) resided alone. Slightly less than a third (32%) resided in three-person households. See Table 1.

Table 1. Household Size

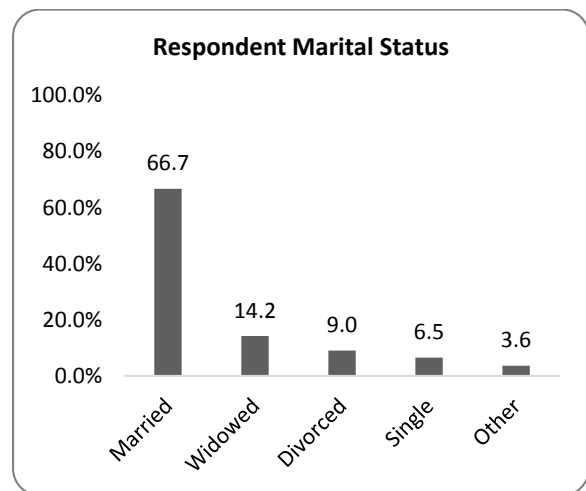
Household Size	n	%
1 person HH	147	21.8%
2 person HHs	312	46.2%
3+ person HHS	216	32.0%

Home Ownership

Most of the survey participants owned their own home (92.2%). Less than 8 percent (7.8%) of survey respondents were renters.

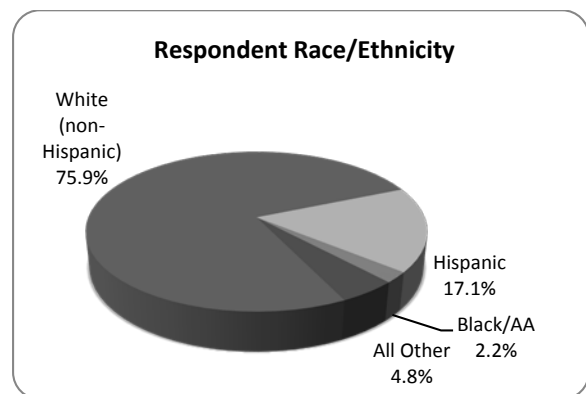
Marital Status

Regarding marital status, about two-thirds (66.7%) of survey respondents were married. The remaining one-third of the study participants reported being widowed (14.2%), divorced (9%), single (6.5%), or some other status (3.6%). The following chart details the marital status reported by respondents.



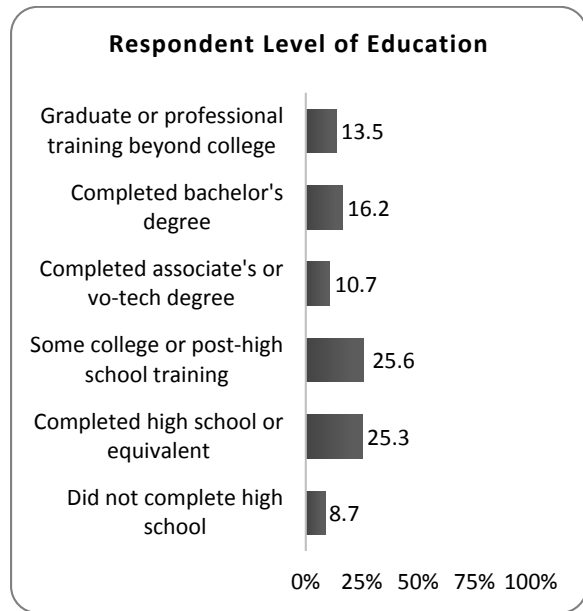
Race/Ethnicity

Three quarters (75.9%) of respondents were White (non-Hispanic), 17.1 percent of respondents were Hispanic, and 2.2 percent of respondents were Black/African American. Approximately 5 percent reported being some other race/ethnicity.



Education Level

The vast majority of study participants (91.3%) had at least a high school diploma (or equivalent). Only 8.7 percent had not earned a high school diploma. About one quarter (25.6%) of participants reported having attended some college, 10.7 percent reported having either a vocational/technical and/or associates degree, 16.2 percent had earned a bachelor’s degree, and 13.5 percent reported post-graduate level education.



Employment

Slightly more than half of the study participants (51.1%) reported that they were currently not employed. Eight in ten respondents between the ages of 18 and 50 were employed compared to fewer than 2 in 10 respondents who were 65 years of age or older. Representation in the workforce drops slightly for survey respondents between 51 and 64 years of age. Within this category, 61.5 percent of respondents report working either full or part time.

Most working respondents were employed full-time (82%). Full-time workers traveled on average 19 miles to work with an average 23 minutes of travel time. The average travel time for part-time workers was slightly less than 15 minutes for a 12.7 mile commute.

Table 2. Respondent Employment Status

Employment Status	n	%
Not Employed	342	51.1%
Employed Full-time	267	39.9%
Employed Part-time	60	9.0%

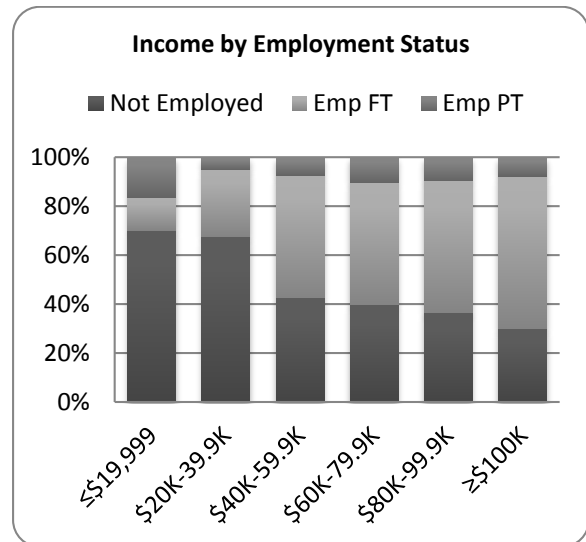
Household Income Level

The 2013 Texas Rural Survey captured respondents in all income levels. The following table summarizes the household income levels represented among study participants.

Table 3: Respondents' Household Income Range

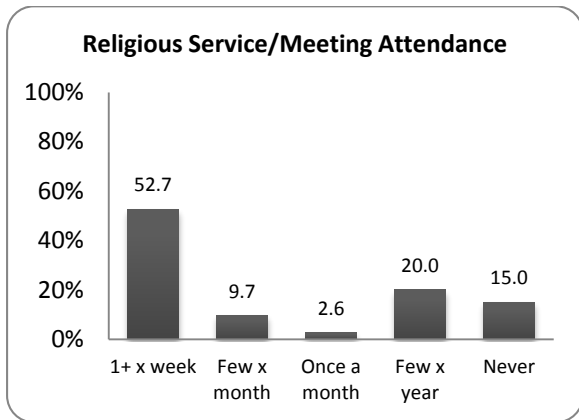
Income Range	n	%
≤\$19,999	113	17.5%
\$20,000 - \$39,999	148	22.9%
\$40,000 - \$59,999	114	17.6%
\$60,000 - \$79,999	90	13.9%
\$80,000 - \$99,999	65	10.0%
≥\$100,000	117	18.1%

The following chart summarizes income by employment status among survey respondents. As may be expected, income varied widely by employment status. Respondents who were not employed and/or who were employed part-time were over-represented among the lower income ranges.



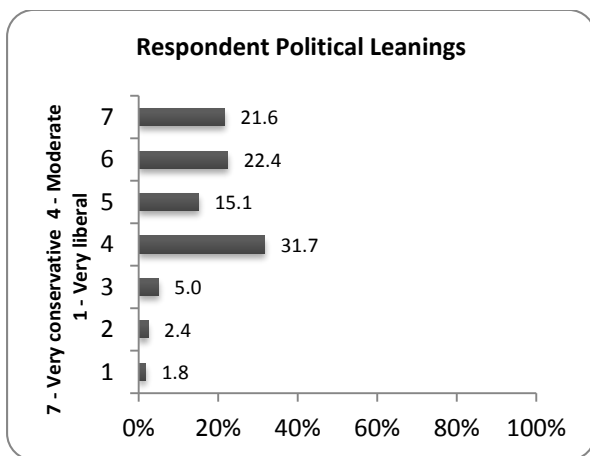
Religious Service/Meeting Attendance

Survey participants were split among those who attended religious services regularly and those whose attendance was less frequent. Over half (52.7%) reported going to services at least once a week. At the other extreme, 35 percent of study participants reported that they never attended or, at most, attended only a few times per year.

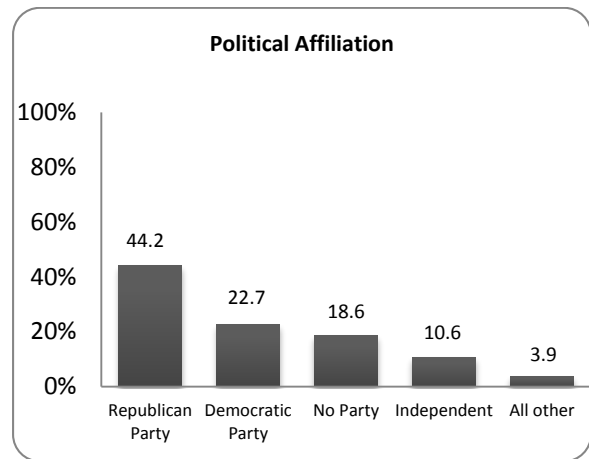


Political Affiliation

Respondents were asked to indicate their political views on a response scale ranging from 1 “very liberal” to 7 “very conservative.” A large majority of respondents reported being more conservative; 44 percent of study respondents indicated that they were either a 6 or 7 on the political view scale. This is in marked contrast to only 4.2 percent of the respondents who indicated a 1 or 2 on the political view scale.



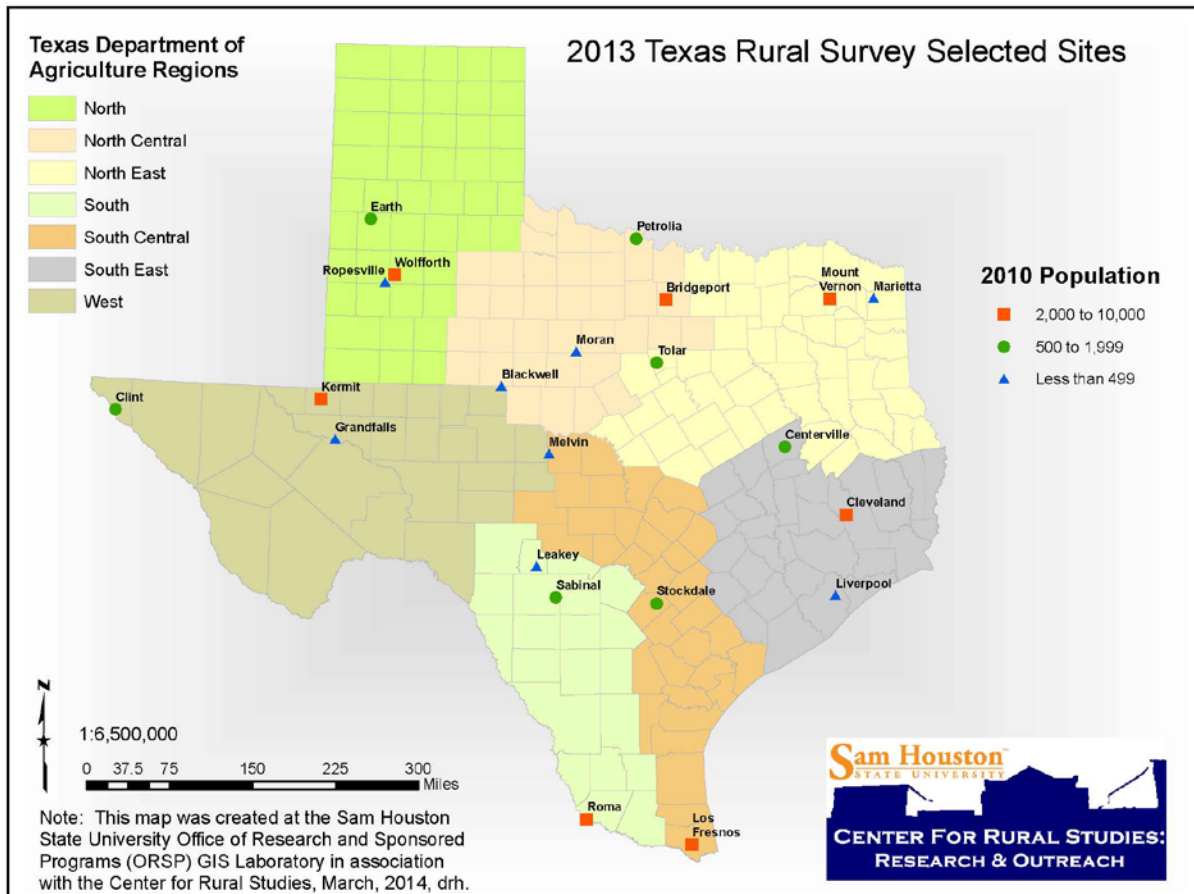
In addition to political view, participants were also asked to indicate which political party (if any) they affiliated with. Just over four in ten respondents (44.2%) affiliated with the Republican Party. This contrasts to 22.7 percent of respondents who indicated a Democratic Party affiliation. Interestingly, 18.6 percent of the participants were apolitical – not affiliating with any political party. One in ten reported an Independent affiliation.



Concluding Comments

Overall, this report provided a summary of the 2013 Texas Rural Survey respondents’ characteristics with respect to their age, gender, marital status, race, political affiliation, religious service/meeting attendance, and household income. No conclusions or inferences were made. Readers interested in statistical analyses and more detailed information should contact the faculty/staff of the Center for Rural Studies at Sam Houston State University.

Appendix



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