

Appendix J

Rationale for excluding day laborers

Exclusion of Day Laborers in the Congressional Underreporting Project

The Congressional Underreporting Survey Squad has concluded that including day laborers in the survey population poses multiple, potentially insurmountable, challenges. We recognize that the inclusion or focus on day laborers was not a requirement of the Congressional statement of work. However, in developing this questionnaire with no employment status restrictions, it became evident that this group needed special consideration because of their unique reporting requirements, or lack thereof. Recognizing this group resulted in them having their own set of questions and skip patterns.

Although we felt that we had adequately captured this group and targeted appropriate questions to them, when we attempted to pilot the questions we found the issues related to inclusion and eventual analysis to be more complicated than we had acknowledged. Consequently, we are recommending exclusion of the informal day laborer population for the following reasons:

- (1) This is a very small population within the NEISS-Work dataset to begin with. Then there are added issues of how many we will actually be able to capture. For instance, how many will have reliable contact information? How many will actually complete a survey from a government agency? (It is estimated that three-quarters of day laborers are undocumented immigrants.)
- (2) At a minimum, we need 20 day laborers to complete the questionnaire in order to establish this group; we need 40 respondents to report a dichotomous variable among this sub-population *IF* their answers are divided evenly between the two options. If we do not meet these minimum requirements, they become grouped in aggregate with the formal working population and likely bias the data because their issues are very different.
- (3) Language and cultural barriers affecting the comprehension and interpretation of this questionnaire are highly likely. It is difficult to address these issues because over half of the day labor workforce is from Mexico, while another quarter is from Central America. Even if it were possible to address the variety of language and cultural issues within the day laborer population, the language and cultural differences would diminish comparability of this population with the formal working sector population.
- (4) The language and cultural barriers may also affect completion rates. Day laborers may be willing to try and complete the questionnaire, but become frustrated at their difficulty in understanding the questions and not complete it.
- (5) There are other agencies working on providing a picture of the day laborer population, including employment issues. These agencies will have a much better respondent capture and be able to present a more comprehensive story of the issues surrounding this type of informal employment.

Source for day laborer statistics

Valenzuela, Jr. Abel, Nik Theodore, Edwin Melendez, and Ana Luz Gonzalez. 2006. "On the Corner: Day Labor in the United States." Technical Report, UCLA Center for the Study of Urban Poverty.