

**THE 2005 DELTA RURAL POLL:
METHODS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE**

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August, 2005

Research Paper No. 05-01
Center for Community and Economic Development

DELTA RURAL POLL



Barton, Alan W. *The 2005 Delta Rural Poll: Methods and Characteristics of the Sample*. Research Paper No. 05-01, Center for Community and Economic Development. Delta State University, Cleveland, MS. August, 2005.

The Delta Rural Poll is administered by the faculty associates at the Center for Community and Economic Development (CCED) at Delta State University (DSU), with assistance from the DSU Division of Social Sciences. The 2005 survey was conducted by the Social Science Research Center at Mississippi State University under the supervision of Dr. Wolfgang Frese. The CCED faculty associates acknowledge and thank the Mid-South Delta Consortium for providing funding for the Delta Rural Poll.

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Contents

Executive Summary	vii
Introduction	1
Planning the 2005 Delta Rural Poll	1
Methods	2
Characteristics of the 2005 Sample	6
Conclusion	23

List of Figures

The Mississippi Delta	vi
Figure 1: Age of 2005 Delta Rural Poll Respondents	7
Figure 2: Distribution of 2005 Delta Rural Poll Respondents' Age	7
Figure 3: Gender of 2005 Delta Rural Poll Respondents	8
Figure 4: Race of 2005 Delta Rural Poll Respondents	10
Figure 5: Marital Status of 2005 Delta Rural Poll Respondents	12
Figure 6: Educational Attainment of 2005 Delta Rural Poll Respondents	14
Figure 7: Employment Status of 2005 Delta Rural Poll Respondents	16
Figure 8: Total 2002 Household Income Before Taxes	18
Figure 9a: Percent of 2005 Delta Rural Poll Respondents by County of Residence	20
Figure 9b: Percent of Total Population by County	20
Figure 10: Size of Place of Residence of 2005 Delta Rural Poll Respondents	21
Figure 11: Type of Place of Residence of 2005 Delta Rural Poll Respondents	22
Figure 12: Length of Time of 2005 Delta Rural Poll Respondents Have Lived in the Same Community	23

List of Tables

Table 1: Gender by County, 2005 Delta Rural Poll and 2000 U.S. Census	9
Table 2: Race by County, 2005 Delta Rural Poll and 2000 U.S. Census	11
Table 3: Martial Status by County, 2005 Delta Rural Poll and 2000 U.S. Census	13
Table 4: Educational Attainment by County, 2005 Delta Rural Poll and 2000 U.S. Census . .	15
Table 5: Employment Status and Farm/Business Ownership, 2005 Delta Rural Poll Respondents	17
Table 6: Total Household Income by County, 2005 Delta Rural Poll and 2000 U.S. Census .	19
Table B1: Occupied Households with Telephone Service in 11 Mississippi Delta Counties. .	27
Table C1: Age of Respondent: Comparison of the 2003 and 2005 Delta Rural Polls	28
Table C2: Gender of Respondent: Comparison of the 2003 and 2005 Delta Rural Polls	28
Table C3: Race of Respondent: Comparison of the 2003 and 2005 Delta Rural Polls	29
Table C4: Marital Status of Respondent: Comparison of the 2003 and 2005 Delta Rural Polls	29
Table C5: Educational Attainment of Respondent: Comparison of the 2003 and 2005 Delta Rural Polls	30
Table C6: Employment Status of Respondent: Comparison of the 2003 and 2005 Delta Rural Polls	30
Table C7: Household Income of Respondent: Comparison of the 2003 and 2005 Delta Rural Polls	31
Table C8: Percent of Respondents by County of Residence: Comparison of the 2003 and 2005 Delta Rural Polls	31
Table C9: Size of Place of Respondents' Residence: Comparison of the 2003 and 2005 Delta Rural Polls.	32
Table C10: Type of Place of Respondents' Residence: Comparison of the 2003 and 2005 Delta Rural Polls.	32
Table C11: Length of Time Respondents Have Lived in the Same Community: Comparison of the 2003 and 2005 Delta Rural Polls	33

The Mississippi Delta



THE 2005 DELTA RURAL POLL: METHODS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE

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Executive Summary

The second Delta Rural Poll survey was conducted in January and February, 2005. Researchers at Delta State University's Center for Community and Economic Development developed the poll to chronicle attitudes and behaviors of the population of 11 northwestern Mississippi counties. DSU researchers prepared the initial questionnaire, which was administered to a randomly selected sample of Delta residents by the Survey Research Unit at Mississippi State University's Social Science Research Center. The 2005 questionnaire collects demographic information, and asks respondents about their quality of life, their employment, their perceptions of the Delta workforce, their opinions on heritage tourism in the Delta, and their health care.

The 2005 survey generated responses from 1,009 Deltans. The mean age of respondents to the 2005 Delta Rural Poll was 50.2 years. Two-thirds of respondents were female, 62.0 percent were African American, 43.4 percent were married, and 27.4 percent had never married. Slightly less than one half of the sample had a high school diploma or less, while one-quarter had a college degree or higher. Three-fifths had been employed during 2004, while 4.2 percent were unemployed. Twelve percent owned a farm or a business. Sixty percent had an income of less than \$30,000 in 2004. About 40 percent lived in communities of 10,000 residents or more, while slightly more than one-quarter live in or near communities of 1,000 or fewer residents.

The purpose of the Delta Rural Poll is to serve the people of the Delta and to provide policy-makers with data on current issues to inform state and local policy decisions. The poll also provides Delta communities with data and opportunities to engage in the process of social science research, both important components of an overall strategy of community and economic development. Some of these opportunities will come through the qualitative interviews which follow the annual survey. Interviews and focus groups on workforce development and heritage tourism are scheduled to begin in late 2005.

THE 2005 DELTA RURAL POLL: Methods and Characteristics of the Sample

Alan W. Barton, Ph.D.

Introduction

The 2005 Delta Rural Poll, administered by the Center for Community and Economic Development (CCED) at Delta State University (DSU), was conducted in January and February of 2005. This was the second iteration of this survey; the first was carried out in October and November, 2003 (Barton, 2004). The primary objective of the Delta Rural Poll is to develop an on-going database on social characteristics and attitudes of the people of the Delta region of northwestern Mississippi, which will serve to inform better policy and community development initiatives by and for the area's residents. This report describes the methods used to collect data, and presents summary demographic results from the 2005 survey. The summary results are intended to describe the sample that was drawn and used in the survey. Summary results are compared to data from the 2000 U.S. Census to assess the accuracy of the Delta Rural Poll survey. More detailed analysis and results can be found in the various policy and research reports issued by the CCED.¹

Planning the 2005 Delta Rural Poll

The Delta Rural Poll project was initiated in the spring of 2003 through discussions between faculty associates at the Center for Community and Economic Development.² This collaboration led to the first survey in the fall of 2003, followed by qualitative data collection on education in the Delta during the summer and fall of 2004. Planning for the 2005 Delta Rural Poll began with the formation of the 2005 Delta Rural Poll Faculty Committee as data collection from the 2003 poll was winding down. The 2005 committee consisted of four CCED faculty associates: Dr. Alan Barton, Dr. John Green, Dr. Albert Nylander and Dr. Brent Hales. It is the responsibility of

¹ All policy and research reports produced in conjunction with the Delta Rural Poll are available on the CCED website: <http://www.deltastate.edu/cced/ruralpoll.htm>.

² Barton (2004) chronicles the history of this project.

this committee to oversee all aspects of both quantitative and qualitative data collection for the 2005 Delta Rural Poll.

After discussing possible themes, it was decided that topics for the 2005 Delta Rural Poll would be workforce development and heritage tourism. The 2003 annual survey had three topical themes (education, technology use, and health care). For the 2005 poll, the committee decided to reduce the number of topical themes from three to two, to allow for a more in-depth coverage of each theme. Workforce development has been an on-going research interest of CCED faculty associates, and supports many of the community development projects administered by the CCED. Efforts to develop heritage tourism in the Mississippi Delta have been centered at the Delta Center for Culture and Learning at DSU, with some support from the CCED. Data from the Delta Rural Poll on heritage tourism have the potential to increase the role of the CCED as a collaborative partner in the development of heritage tourism in the Delta, and particularly the formation of a national heritage area in the region.³

Methods

General Issues: Time and Place

The Delta Rural Poll combines a variety of data gathering techniques to generate a comprehensive database of both quantitative and qualitative information. The primary event is an annual survey, which produces quantitative data on demographics, quality of life, employment, and topical issues. Many of the questions are repeated at each iteration of the survey to develop time series data on basic conditions in the Delta.⁴ Following the annual survey, researchers conduct interviews, focus groups, and other qualitative techniques to follow up on specific topics and to explore issues that arise from the quantitative results. Qualitative interviewing may occur in partnership with other organizations, and may also engage graduate students and other researchers in the activities of the Delta Rural Poll. For example, following the 2003 Delta Rural Poll, the Institute for Community-Based Research, another program of the

³ Delta State University has recently created a new administrative division to oversee both the Delta Center for Culture and Learning and the Center for Community and Economic Development, providing further opportunities for collaboration on heritage tourism and other community development projects.

⁴ These questions are identical to those used in similar surveys in other states, to generate comparative results as well.

CCED, partnered with the Delta Rural Poll to conduct interviews and focus groups with teachers and community groups on educational issues in the Delta. Several graduate students, employed by the Delta Rural Poll, the Institute for Community-Based Research, or supported as Hearin Fellows through the Division of Social Sciences at DSU, participated in qualitative data collection, and one is completing a M.S. thesis using these data. Qualitative data collection on heritage tourism and workforce development is currently underway, to support the results of the 2005 annual survey.

The 2005 survey was the second annual event, following the design agreed upon by the Delta Rural Poll Faculty Committee at the beginning of the project.⁵ We now have the experience of two polls under our belts, and a question the committee must now consider is whether to maintain the survey as an annual event, or change the time frame, most likely to once every other year. The initial funding for the poll, provided by the Mid-South Delta Consortium, covered two annual cycles. Researchers are currently preparing proposals to extend the funding for this project as well.

The Delta Rural Poll focuses on the eleven “core” Delta counties. These are the counties that lie wholly within the Yazoo-Mississippi floodplain, and include: Bolivar, Coahoma, Humphreys, Issaquena, Leflore, Quitman, Sharkey, Sunflower, Tallahatchie, Tunica and Washington. The committee selected these counties as they best represent the unique characteristics of the Delta region. Both quantitative and qualitative data collection are focused on these counties.

Development of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire for the 2005 survey was developed by the members of the Delta Rural Poll Faculty Committee. The initial project design calls for questions on demographics (age, sex, race, income, place of residence, length of residence, intent to move), employment and quality of life to be repeated with each iteration. These questions were initially developed with assistance from administrators of similar polls in other states, and mimic the wording of other polls to produce valid comparative data. The committee carefully reviewed the questions from the 2003

⁵ Following the 2003 survey, conducted in October and November, the committee agreed to change the time of year for the annual survey to February, so the 2005 survey was conducted approximately 15 months after the first survey. The change was made to align the Delta Rural Poll with similar surveys in other states. Also, a survey in February fits better with the research schedules of DSU researchers.

annual survey, and revised the demographics, employment and quality of life questions for the 2005 survey. The wording of individual questions was left intact for the most part; however, questions that did not produce useful data in 2003 were dropped, and some new questions were added.

As noted above, the topical questions on the 2005 questionnaire focused on workforce development and heritage tourism. Potential questions were submitted by researchers interested in these topics, and the questions were reviewed and revised by other committee members. In the end, we produced ten questions on workforce development, in addition to the general questions on the respondent's employment, and twenty-two questions on heritage tourism. Two of the questions on health care from the 2003 Delta Rural Poll were repeated in 2005, to support continuing research on the topic by Dr. John Green.

Once the questionnaire was completed, it was pilot tested on a small group of respondents to verify that the questions were easy to understand, and that respondents provided answers that were appropriate to the intent of the question. The questionnaire was also approved by the Institutional Review Board at Delta State University. Following that, it was sent to the Survey Research Unit (SRU) at the Social Science Research Center (SSRC) at Mississippi State University (MSU), who were contracted to carry out the survey. Dr. Wolfgang Frese, director of the SRU, reviewed and edited the questionnaire, and it was also approved by the MSU Institutional Review Board. Finally, the survey was conducted by the staff at the SRU.

Data Collection

Data were collected through a telephone survey. The SRU operates a sophisticated Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) laboratory, and they have extensive experience carrying out surveys of this nature. Importantly, they have successfully conducted telephone surveys in the Mississippi Delta region, and are familiar with some of the issues in the area. The SRU conducted the 2003 annual survey, and the members of the Delta Rural Poll Faculty Committee were very satisfied with the results.

Similar surveys in other states are generally done using mail questionnaires; however, mail surveys have produced poor results in the past in the Delta region. A telephone survey is more

personal than a mail questionnaire, and in accordance with local norms, Delta residents are much more likely to develop trust and collaborate with strangers if they have personal contact. The telephone is not the ideal tool for generating such contact; however, it is an improvement over an impersonal mail questionnaire, and the Survey Research Unit's experienced interviewers are adept at producing a high response rate among Delta households. Telephone interviews do present problems as well, notably that the Delta region has the lowest percentage of home telephones in the country, which could introduce a systematic bias into the results. Across the eleven counties, over 90 percent of households have a telephone, however.⁶ Telephone interviews also present a problem in selecting an appropriate within-household respondent. A random selection procedure is used in each household contacted; however, the results show that a disproportionate percentage of respondents are female, suggesting that many households are not adhering precisely to the random selection procedure. We apply a weighting procedure, described in Appendix A, to compensate for this bias.

The SRU uses random digit dialing techniques to contact a simple random sample of telephone numbers (SSRC, 2005). Numbers were drawn from the telephone prefixes that correspond to the 11 counties of interest, with the last four digits randomly generated. Within each household contacted, the respondent was selected using a screening procedure. The interviewer asked to speak to the person in the household 18 years of age or older with either the next or the most recent birthday (whether to ask for the next or the most recent birthday was randomly selected for each call). The selected respondent was then asked the 37 questions on the questionnaire.⁷

The Survey Research Unit dialed a total of 4,562 randomly selected numbers (SSRC, 2005). Of these, 2,144 numbers were ineligible, due to a communication problem such as a disconnected number or fax machine, or because the respondent was away or unable to participate due to a health problem; 775 had no response, because the number was busy, there was no answer or an answering machine, or the person responding refused to participate before a respondent could be selected; and 558 ended in callbacks that could not be completed within the time frame. A total of 1,009 interviews were completed, and 66 screened respondents refused to participate. The sampling error for the data set was less than ± 3.1 percent with a 95 percent confidence interval.

⁶ See Barton (2004) for a more in-depth discussion of this issue.

⁷ Some of the questions involved multiple parts with screening questions.

Data Analysis

Completed interviews were used to generate an SPSS data file, which the SRU delivered to DSU researchers in late February, 2005. The weight variable was created (see Appendix A) and the file was distributed to the Delta Rural Poll Faculty Committee for analysis. Results reported here represent simple frequency distributions and cross-tabulations of some of the key variables, with the intent of describing the sample. All results presented here were generated using unweighted data, unless otherwise indicated.

Characteristics of the 2005 Sample

The purpose of this section is to describe the sample that was used in the 2005 survey, and to assess how this sample compares to data from the 2000 U.S. Census. The decennial census provides the most accurate data on the entire population.⁸ The results from the Delta Rural Poll presented here use *unweighted* data. This section summarizes basic characteristics of poll respondents such as age, gender, race, size of the nearest community and county of residence.

Respondent Characteristics

Age Respondents represent a wide range of ages. All respondents were at least 18 years old, as specified in the screening criteria; one respondent was over age 96.⁹ The mean age for all respondents was 50.2 years, with a standard deviation of 17.8. There were 25 missing cases (2.5% of all cases), in which the respondent was either unable to provide an answer or refused to reveal his/her age.

Figure 1 shows the age of respondents to the 2005 Delta Rural Poll. Less than 15 percent of the respondents were under age 30, and about 10 percent were over age 75. Over half of respondents were between 30 and 60 years old, and an additional 20 percent were between 60

⁸ The 2005 Delta Rural Poll survey was conducted at approximately the midpoint between decennial censuses, and given the high outmigration rates in the Delta, it is likely the data for the whole population of the Delta have changed. For the purposes of this report, we have opted to use the data collected in 2000, rather than estimate changes using trend analyses.

⁹ Respondents over age 96 were coded as 97, and this produced one response.

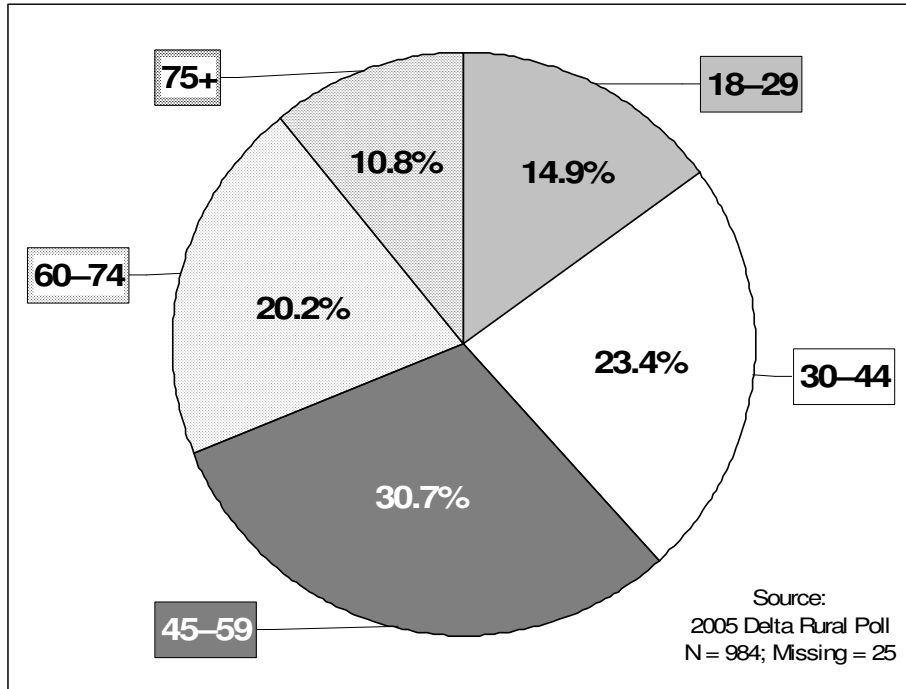


Figure 1: Age of 2005 Delta Rural Poll Respondents

and 75. The distribution of respondents by age is shown in Figure 2. The distribution appears normal, although a smaller than expected percentage of respondents came from the 28 to 32 year age range. This may be because of out-migration among people in that age group.

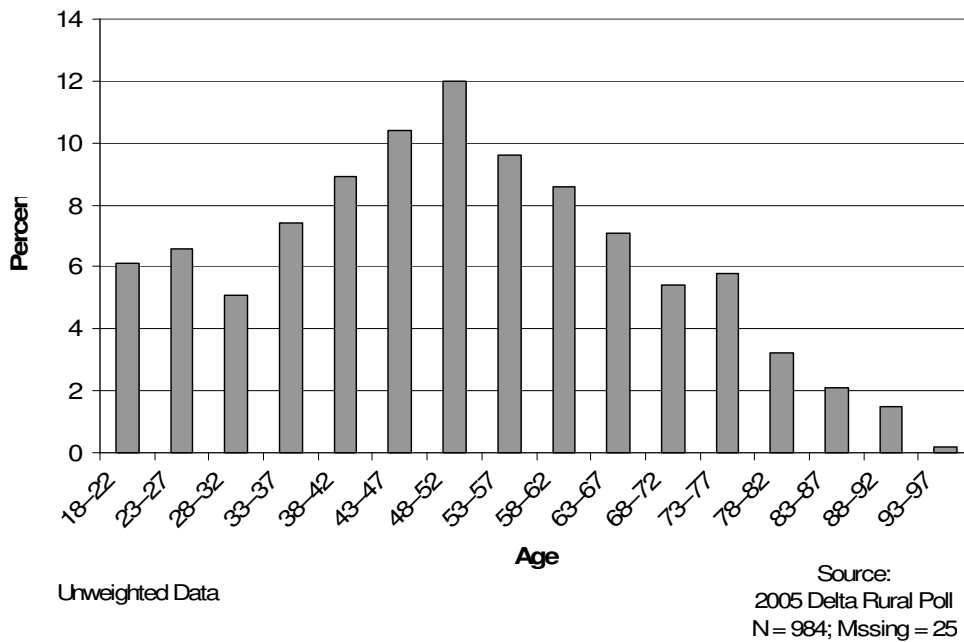


Figure 2: Distribution of 2005 Delta Rural Poll Respondents' Age

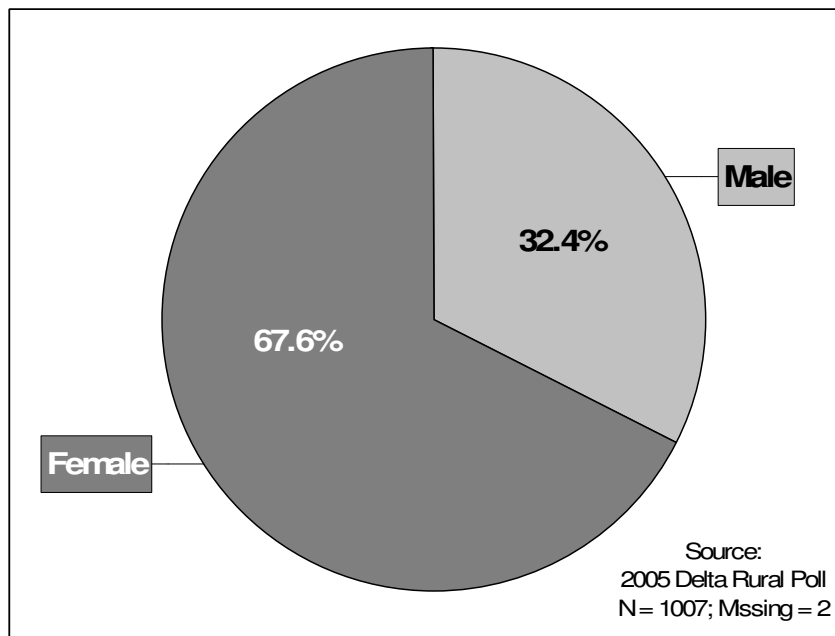


Figure 3: Gender of 2005 Delta Rural Poll Respondents

Comparing results from the 2005 Delta Rural Poll with figures from the 2000 Census (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004a) shows that the Delta Rural Poll sample was slightly older than the general population. The 2005 Delta Rural Poll sample showed lower percentages than the Census in the lower age categories: 14.9 percent of the Delta Rural Poll sample were in the 18–29 age range, and 23.4 percent of the respondents were 30–44 years old. For the population, 26.5 percent were between 18 and 29, while 28.9 percent were in the 30–44 range. In the older age categories, however, the Delta Rural Poll sample showed higher percentages than the Census. Among those in the Delta Rural Poll sample, 30.7 percent fell into the 45–59 age range, higher than the 23.1 percent rate for the general population, and 20.2 percent of the Delta Rural Poll sample were in the 60–74 age category, compared to 13.3 percent of the population. For those age 75 and over, 10.8 percent were included in the Delta Rural Poll sample, compared to 8.1 percent in the general population.

Gender Figure 3 shows the distribution of respondents by gender. There were two cases for which data on gender were not recorded. Two-thirds of the respondents to the 2005 Delta Rural Poll were female, which is higher than the proportion of females in the general population in the

Delta region.¹⁰ According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 53.6 percent of the adult population of the eleven core Delta counties is female (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004a). In addition, females outnumber males in nine of the eleven counties. Table 1 compares the proportion of females for each of the eleven counties, showing the unweighted and weighted frequencies for the 2005 Delta Rural Poll and the percentages for adults and for the total population from the 2000 U.S. Census.

**Table 1:
Gender by County
2005 Delta Rural Poll and 2000 U.S. Census**

County	Percent Female			
	2005 Delta Rural Poll		2000 U.S. Census	
	Unweighted	Weighted	Age 18+	Total Population
Bolivar	68.3	55.4	55.0	53.2
Coahoma	66.2	56.0	56.3	54.1
Humphreys	63.0	54.8	56.0	53.4
Issaquena	76.7	50.0	43.5	46.8
Leflore	70.4	53.4	53.3	52.0
Quitman	62.5	55.3	55.8	53.6
Sharkey	75.0	56.0	54.8	53.0
Sunflower	77.3	46.0	45.5	46.3
Tallahatchie	68.7	54.4	54.2	53.3
Tunica	50.0	57.1	53.8	52.3
Washington	64.3	61.5	55.5	53.3
Total	67.6	55.3	53.6	52.1

Source: 2005 Delta Rural Poll, U.S. Census Bureau, 2004a
Delta Rural Poll N = 1,007, Missing = 2

¹⁰ According to the administrator of the survey, who has conducted several similar surveys in the Delta region, a gender bias of this nature is not unusual.

Race Nearly 99 percent of the valid cases (N=989) identified themselves as either White/Caucasian or Black/African American. Five respondents (0.5% of valid cases) identified themselves as Native Americans or American Indians, one respondent (0.1%) was Hispanic/Latino, and one (0.1%) was Asian or Pacific Islander. Five respondents (0.5%) identified themselves as another race, including “Mexican,” “American,” “Indian from India,” “Caucasian and Native American” and “White and American Indian.” Twenty respondents (2.0% of all 1,009 cases) either refused to answer this question or indicated that they did not know the answer.

The distribution of respondents by race is shown in Figure 4, and indicates that 62 percent of respondents were black, while 38 percent were white. The proportion of black and white residents in each county is shown in Table 2, with comparison figures from the 2000 U.S. Census.¹¹ For all 11 counties, 61.3 percent of respondents to the Delta Rural Poll were black, while 62.1 percent of the adult population was black according to the 2000 Census (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004a). A county-by-county comparison shows that Issaquena County deviated substantially from the Census figures; only 28.6 percent of Delta Rural Poll respondents were

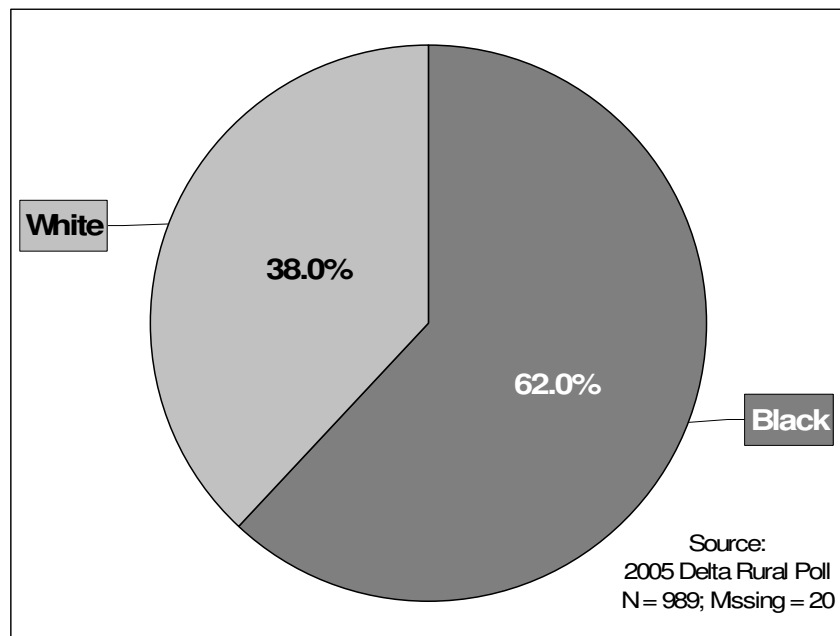


Figure 4: Race of 2005 Delta Rural Poll Respondents

¹¹ Figure 4 is calculated eliminating the 1.2% of cases that indicated a race other than black or white. The comparison to Census statistics shown in Table 2 accounts for the “other” cases in the Delta Rural Poll.

**Table 2:
Race by County,
2005 Delta Rural Poll and 2000 U.S. Census**

County	Percent Black			Percent White		
	2005 DRP	2000 Census, Age 18+	2000 Census, All	2005 DRP	2000 Census, Age 18+	2000 Census, All
Bolivar	62.5	59.8	65.1	37.5	38.5	33.2
Coahoma	66.7	64.3	69.2	31.1	34.2	29.3
Humphreys	62.2	67.0	71.5	37.8	31.5	27.2
Issaquena	27.6	58.5	62.8	69.0	40.6	36.3
Leflore	58.5	63.2	67.7	40.1	34.3	30.0
Quitman	62.5	63.6	68.6	37.5	35.5	30.5
Sharkey	60.0	64.3	69.3	40.0	34.4	29.4
Sunflower	65.8	66.1	69.9	32.5	32.6	28.9
Tallahatchie	52.2	54.3	59.4	47.8	44.6	39.6
Tunica	62.9	64.2	70.2	34.3	33.4	27.5
Washington	63.1	59.8	64.6	35.7	38.8	34.0
Total	61.3	62.1	66.8	37.5	36.3	31.6

Source: 2005 Delta Rural Poll, U.S. Census Bureau, 2004a

black, compared to 58.5 percent of the adult population according to the 2000 Census. The total population of Issaquena County is only 2,274 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004a), and a total of thirty Issaquena residents responded to the Delta Rural Poll. Aside from Issaquena County, the percentages from the Delta Rural Poll match the figures for adults from the 2000 Census reasonably closely.

Percentages of black residents in the 11 counties surveyed range from 59.4 percent (54.3% of adults) in Tallahatchie County to 71.5 percent (67.0% of adults) in Humphreys County. The proportion of whites ranges from 27.2 percent (31.5% of adults) in Humphreys County to 39.6 percent (44.6% of adults) in Tallahatchie County. Although the difference between the sample and the actual population characteristics is relatively small, the Delta Rural Poll sample

systematically under-represents black respondents across eight of the eleven counties. See Appendix A for a description of the weighting procedure that was applied to account for this discrepancy.

Marital Status Figure 5 shows the marital status of respondents to the Delta Rural Poll. Three respondents refused to answer this question. Among the 1,006 valid respondents, 43.4 percent were married, while over half were unmarried. Over one-fourth of all respondents (27.4%) had never married, and 29.2 percent were divorced, separated or widowed.

The Delta Rural Poll sample included a higher percentage of people that were single but previously married than the population, and a lower percentage of people that had never married. The 2000 U.S. Census shows 40.0 percent of the population of the 11 core Delta counties were currently married, 37.7 percent had never married, and 22.3 percent were divorced, separated or widowed (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004d).¹²

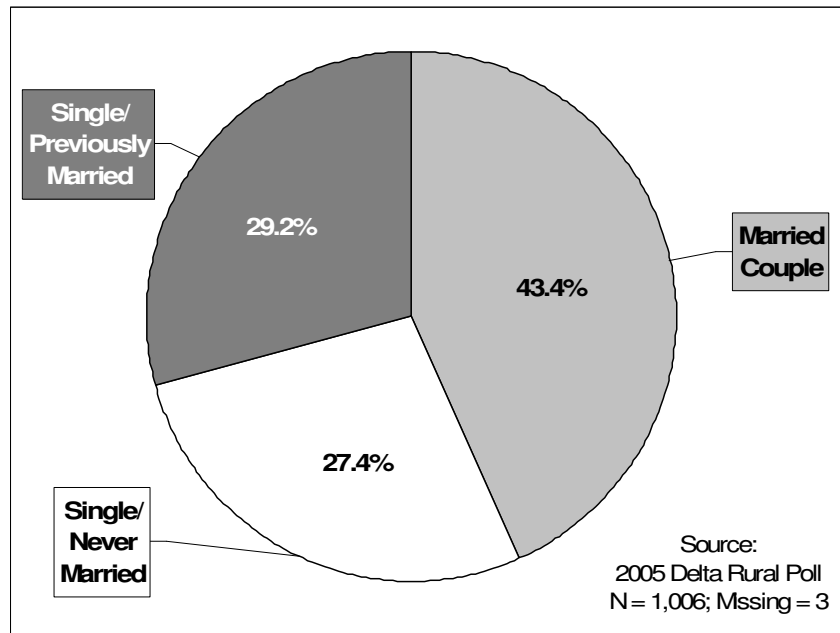


Figure 5: Marital Status of 2005 Delta Rural Poll Respondents

¹² The Census figures are for the population 15 years of age and older, while the Delta Rural Poll data are for the population 18 years of age and older. Census figures cited for “currently married” include the Census categories “Now Married, Spouse Present” and “Now Married, Spouse Absent, Other,” while Census figures for “separated” were drawn from the category “Now Married, Spouse Absent, Separated,” “Widowed” and “Divorced” (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004d).

**Table 3:
Marital Status by County
2005 Delta Rural Poll and 2000 U.S. Census**

County	Percent Married		Percent Single, Never Married		Percent Single, Previously Married	
	2005 DRP	2000 Census	2005 DRP	2000 Census	2005 DRP	2000 Census
Bolivar	42.3	38.1	29.3	40.6	28.5	21.3
Coahoma	38.1	39.8	29.5	36.2	32.4	24.0
Humphreys	50.0	36.4	28.3	41.5	21.7	22.2
Issaquena	60.0	53.2	16.7	29.8	23.3	17.0
Leflore	44.4	39.0	26.1	38.6	29.6	22.4
Quitman	43.9	40.7	22.0	34.1	34.1	25.2
Sharkey	31.3	39.0	25.0	39.4	43.8	21.5
Sunflower	39.5	37.7	29.4	41.9	31.1	20.4
Tallahatchie	49.3	44.6	19.4	33.1	31.3	22.4
Tunica	36.1	37.0	33.3	38.6	30.6	24.4
Washington	45.3	42.9	28.3	34.7	26.3	22.4
Total	43.4	40.0	27.4	37.7	29.2	22.3

Source: 2005 Delta Rural Poll, U.S. Census Bureau, 2004d

Education, Employment and Income

Education A total of 997 respondents provided information on their educational attainment in the Delta Rural Poll. Three respondents (0.3%) said they did not know their highest grade in school, while nine respondents (0.9%) refused to answer. A comparison of the educational data collected in the Delta Rural Poll to 2000 Census data shows that respondents to the Delta Rural Poll had a higher level of educational achievement than the population as a whole.

Figure 6 summarizes educational attainment results for the 2005 survey. Nearly half of the respondents (47.6%) to the Delta Rural Poll had a high school diploma or less. Slightly over one-quarter (26.9%) of respondents had an associates degree or some college, 16.8 percent had

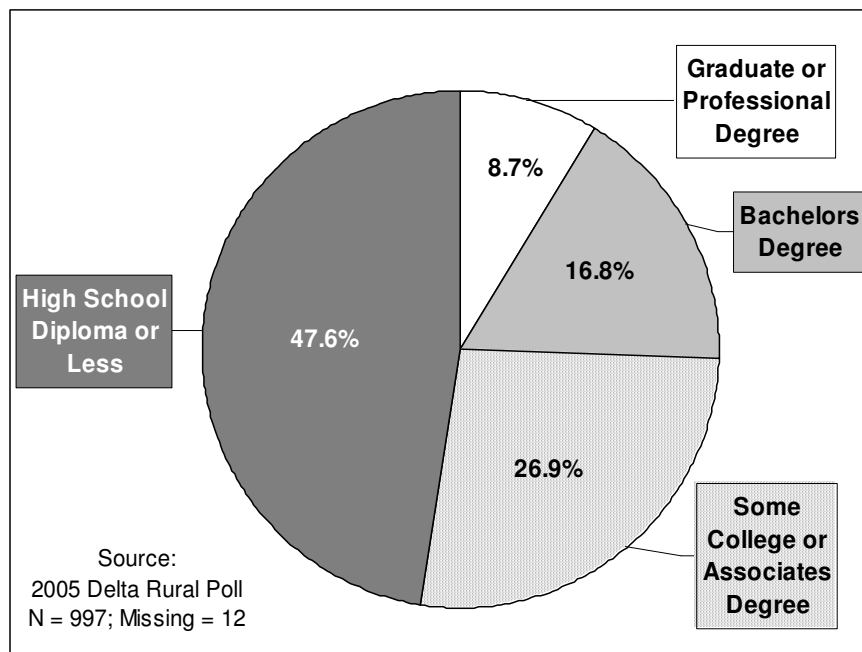


Figure 6: Educational Attainment of 2005 Delta Rural Poll Respondents

completed a bachelors degree, and 8.7 percent indicated that a graduate or professional degree was their highest level achieved. Applying these same categories using 2000 U.S. Census data shows that 63.6 percent of the population of the 11 core Delta counties' highest education achieved was a high school diploma or less, 21.5 percent had some college or an associates degree, 10.0 percent had a bachelors degree, and 4.8 percent had a graduate or professional degree (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004d).¹³

A different breakdown of education results indicates that 68.9 percent of Delta Rural Poll respondents had a high school diploma or higher, and 24.1 percent had a bachelors degree or higher. According to Census Bureau (2004a) data, the rate of high school graduation for all 11 counties was 62.1 percent, and the college graduation rate was 14.9 percent. These data are shown in Table 4, along with a comparison of respondents to the Delta Rural Poll age 25 and above to Census data for the same age group. There is substantial variation by county, both in the Poll and in the Census, but in general the figures show that the sample had a higher level of education than the population as reported in the 2000 Census.¹⁴

¹³ The Census figures reported here are for the population age 25 and over.

¹⁴ The 2005 Delta Rural Poll figures for Sharkey County are anomalous, and deviate from the Census figures substantially. These figures resulted from an unusually small number of respondents from Sharkey County in the 2005 sample.

**Table 4:
Educational Attainment by County, 2005 Delta Rural Poll and 2000 U.S. Census**

	High School Graduates [†]				Bachelors Degree [‡]			
	2005 Delta Rural Poll			2000 U.S. Census, Age 25+	2005 Delta Rural Poll			2000 U.S. Census, Age 25+
	All	Age 25+			All	Age 25+		
	Unweighted	Unweighted	Weighted		Unweighted	Unweighted	Weighted	
Bolivar	73.0	70.6	71.4	65.3	26.2	25.7	27.3	18.8
Coahoma	75.3	74.2	73.3	62.2	22.4	25.0	26.7	16.2
Humphreys	63.0	64.3	63.2	53.7	19.5	21.4	23.1	11.6
Issaquena	80.0	82.1	88.9	58.8	23.3	25.0	22.2	7.1
Leflore	76.6	77.4	78.1	61.9	34.0	37.9	37.5	15.9
Quitman	72.5	70.3	70.6	55.1	17.5	16.2	17.1	10.6
Sharkey	81.4	81.3	80.0	60.6	50.1	50.0	52.0	12.6
Sunflower	75.8	74.0	76.2	59.3	15.5	15.4	16.4	12.0
Tallahatchie	74.6	74.2	74.5	54.4	28.3	27.3	28.6	10.9
Tunica	74.3	73.3	72.4	60.5	25.7	26.7	24.1	9.1
Washington	76.7	76.9	78.0	66.5	26.8	29.4	29.9	16.4
Total, 11 Counties	75.2	74.6	75.1	62.1	25.5	27.0	27.9	14.9
Mississippi Statewide	N/A	N/A	N/A	72.9	N/A	N/A	N/A	16.9
National	N/A	N/A	N/A	80.4	N/A	N/A	N/A	24.4

Source: 2005 Delta Rural Poll, U.S. Census Bureau, 2004a, 2004d

Delta Rural Poll N = 981, Missing = 28 for "All", N = 897 for "Age 25+;" U.S. Census N = 150,379 for all 11 counties

[†]Includes High School Graduates and Higher [‡]Includes College Graduates and Higher

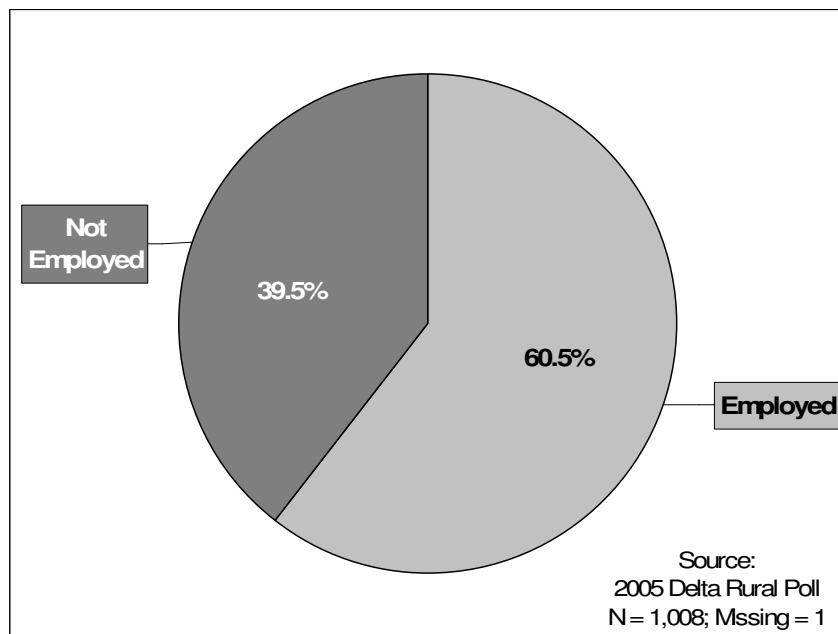


Figure 7: Employment Status of 2005 Delta Rural Poll Respondents

Employment Figure 7 shows the general employment status of Delta Rural Poll respondents. Respondents were asked if they had been employed on a full-time, part-time or seasonal basis at any time during 2004. One respondent answered “Don’t Know or Not Sure,” while 1,008 of the participants provided valid responses. About three-fifths (60.5%) of the respondents indicated that they had been employed, while 39.5 percent said they had not been employed. The employment rate for respondents to the Delta Rural Poll was higher than for the general population as represented by the 2000 Census. According to Census results, 46.5 percent of the population of the 11 core Delta counties was employed (U.S. Census, 2004d).¹⁵

Table 2 summarizes data on employment, entrepreneurship and unemployment. Among all respondents,¹⁶ 12.3 percent said they owned a farm, a business, or both in the Delta. This represents one-fifth (20.3%) of the 605 respondents who were employed at some time in 2004. One-tenth (9.9%) of all respondents that were employed said they owned a farm, business or both. Among the 123 farm and/or business owners, 50.4 percent owned only a business, 20.3 percent owned only a farm, and 9.8 percent owned both.

¹⁵ The Census Bureau calculates employment figures based on the population 16 years old and over, while the Delta Rural Poll sample were age 18 and over.

¹⁶ Six cases were classified as missing, accounting for the slight difference in employment shown on Table 2 compared to Figure 6.

A total of 398 respondents said they were not employed at any time during 2004. Of these, 50.5 percent were retired, 24.1 percent were disabled, 7.0 percent were full time homemakers, and 7.0 percent were students. Forty-two respondents reported that they were unemployed during 2004. This represents 4.2 percent of all respondents, and 10.6 percent of those without employment. Among the unemployed, three-fifths (59.5%) were looking for work, and more than one-quarter (28.6%) were unemployed and not looking for work.

According to the 2000 Census, 6.7 percent of the population was unemployed (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004d); the comparable figure for the 2005 Delta Rural Poll sample is 3.9 percent.¹⁷ This suggests those in the sample are employed at a higher rate than the general population.

**Table 5:
Employment Status and Farm/Business Ownership, 2005 Delta Rural Poll Respondents**

	Percent of Total (n = 1,003)	Percent of Employed (n = 605)	Percent of Owns a Farm and/or a Business (n = 123)
Employed	60.3		
Owns a Farm and/or a Business	12.3	20.3	
Owns a Farm	4.1	6.8	33.3
Owns a Business	6.9	11.4	56.1
Owns Both a Farm and a Business	1.3	2.1	10.6
Employed, Owns a Farm and/or a Business	9.9	16.4	80.5
Employed, Owns a Farm	2.5	4.1	20.3
Employed, Owns a Business	6.2	10.2	50.4
Employed, Owns Both a Farm and a Business	1.2	2.0	9.8
Not Employed	39.7	Percent of Not Employed (n = 398)	
Not Employed, Retired	20.0	50.5	
Not Employed, Disabled	9.6	24.1	
Not Employed, Full-time Homemaker	2.8	7.0	
Not Employed, Student	2.8	7.0	
Unemployed	4.2	10.6	Percent of Unemployed (n = 42[†])
Unemployed, Looking for Work	2.5	6.3	59.5
Unemployed, Not Looking for Work	1.2	3.0	28.6

Source: 2005 Delta Rural Poll; N = 1,003, Missing = 6

[†]42 respondents indicated they were unemployed; 5 of these did not provide a response to the question of whether they were looking for work (either they refused or did not know) and were classified as missing

¹⁷ This is calculated by dividing the number unemployed and looking for work (25) by those in the labor forces, i.e., the sum of those employed and those unemployed and looking for work (635).

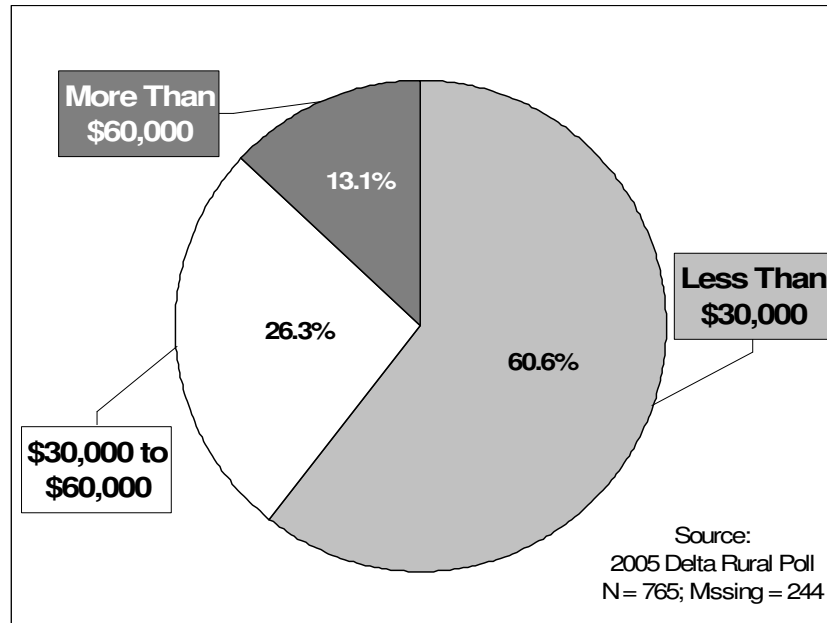


Figure 8: Total 2004 Household Income Before Taxes for 2005 Delta Rural Poll Respondents

Income When asked their total 2004 household income before taxes, 88 respondents indicated that they didn't know and 244 refused to answer. There are 765 valid cases for income. For the 2003 Delta Rural Poll, we grouped income data into three categories for analysis: less than \$30,000, \$30,000 to \$60,000 and more than \$60,000. Figure 8 summarizes 2004 income using these three categories. Over 60 percent of respondents earned less than \$30,000 in 2004, slightly more than one-quarter (26.3%) earned between \$30,000 and \$60,000, while 13.1 percent of the respondents had a total household income over \$60,000.

Table 6 compares 2005 Delta Rural Poll data on total household income with data from the 2000 Census. The Census data for income come from the long form, filled out by every sixth household. This totaled 87,950 households for the 11 counties. The Census data also show income for 1999. Table 6 uses a different grouping of income categories, in order to match available Census data. In general, these data show that the 2005 Delta Rural Poll sample matched the 2000 Census 1-in-6 sample fairly closely for income. The total sample for the Delta Rural Poll showed a slightly higher proportion had incomes below \$10,000 than for the Census sample; however, the Delta Rural Poll sample had slightly lower proportions than the Census for both the \$10,000 to \$50,000 category and for the over \$50,000 category.

**Table 6:
Total Household Income by County,
2005 Delta Rural Poll and 2000 U.S. Census***

County	Households with Annual Incomes Below \$10,000		Households with Annual Incomes \$10,000 to \$49,999		Households with Annual Incomes Over \$50,000	
	2005 DRP [†]	2000 Census [‡]	2005 DRP	2000 Census	2005 DRP	2000 Census
Bolivar	25.5	24.0	57.4	54.7	17.0	21.3
Coahoma	27.0	25.6	59.0	52.7	14.0	21.7
Humphreys	27.0	25.6	45.9	56.9	27.0	17.5
Issaquena	16.0	26.9	56.0	54.0	28.0	19.1
Leflore	30.9	25.6	51.8	54.0	17.3	20.4
Quitman	32.4	26.2	55.9	57.5	11.8	16.3
Sharkey	26.7	23.3	53.3	56.5	20.0	20.2
Sunflower	30.7	20.1	47.7	57.0	21.6	22.9
Tallahatchie	26.9	25.4	50.0	57.9	23.1	16.7
Tunica	25.0	22.8	54.2	55.0	20.8	22.2
Washington	26.3	21.8	52.7	54.7	21.0	23.5
Total	27.5	23.7	53.2	55.0	19.3	21.3

Source: 2005 Delta Rural Poll, U.S. Census Bureau, 2004a

Delta Rural Poll N = 764, Missing = 244; Census N = 87,950 households

[†]Delta Rural Poll income figures are for 2004; [‡]Census income figures are for 1999

*Census figures for income come from long forms, a 1 in 6 sample

Residence

County of Residence The distribution of Delta Rural Poll respondents by county is shown in Figure 9a. All 1,009 respondents were accurately categorized by county, as the telephone prefixes identify the county of residence. To contextualize Delta Rural Poll data, the distribution of the population by county as measured by the 2000 U.S. Census is shown in Figure 9b. The total population for the 11 core Delta counties was 260,855.

The distribution of the Delta Rural Poll sample aligns with the Census distribution for the population reasonably well. According to the 2000 Census, one-quarter of the population

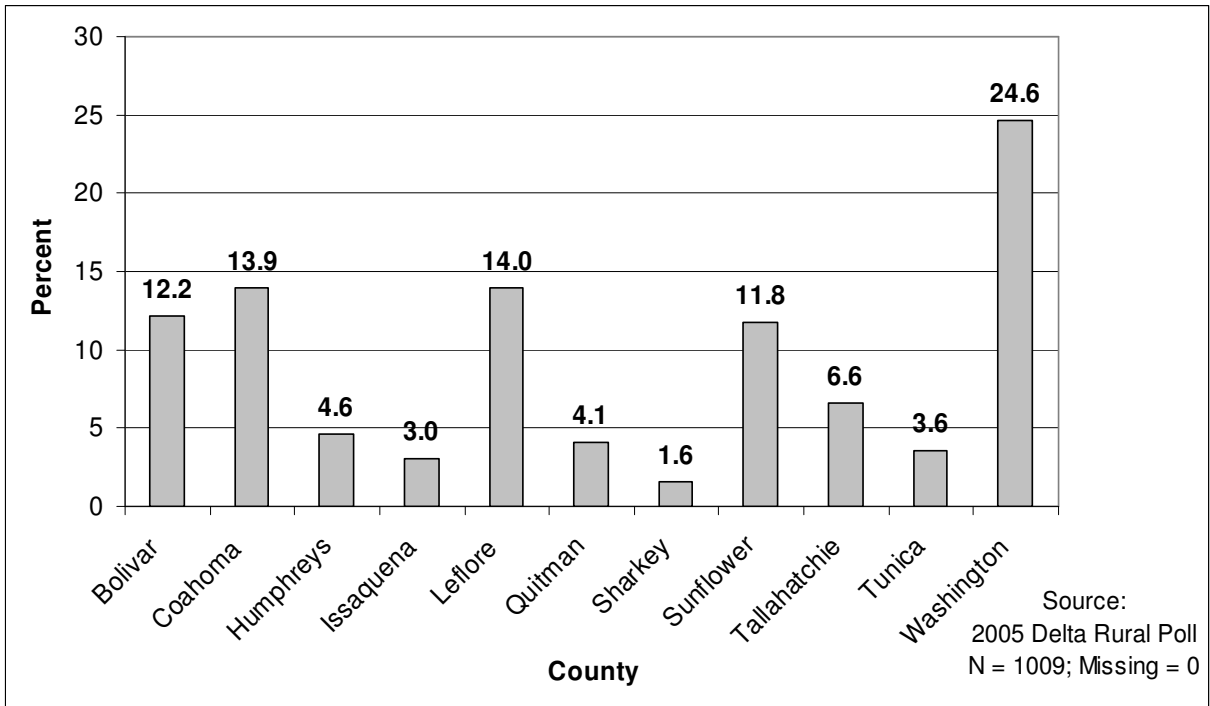


Figure 9a: Percent of 2005 Delta Rural Poll Respondents by County of Residence

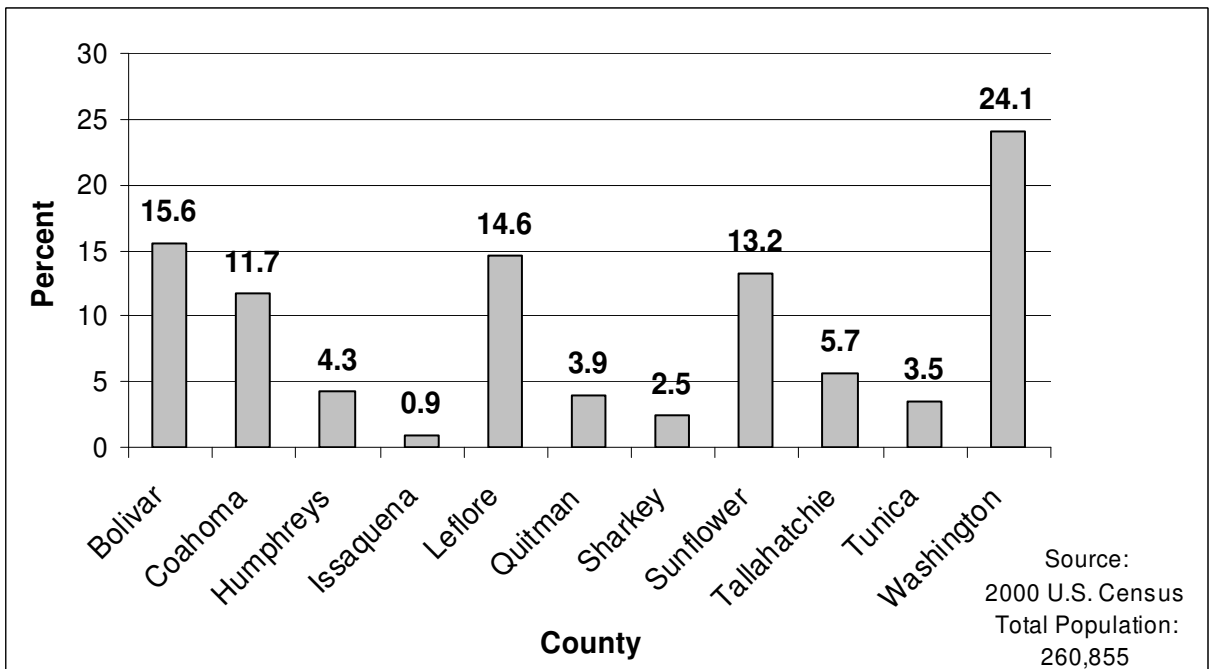


Figure 9b: Percent of Total Population by County

(24.8%) lives in the north Delta (Tunica, Coahoma, Tallahatchie, and Quitman counties), over two-thirds of the population (67.5%) lives in the mid-Delta counties (Washington, Bolivar, Leflore, Sunflower), and only 7.7 percent of the population lives in the south Delta (Issaquena, Sharkey, and Humphreys counties). Amongst respondents to the 2005 Delta Rural Poll, 28.2 percent lived in the north Delta counties, 62.6 percent lived in the mid-Delta counties, and 9.2 percent lived in the south Delta counties.

Size of Place Respondents to the 2005 Delta Rural Poll were asked the size of the nearest community, and were given a choice of several size ranges. Many respondents were unable to answer this, as 274 (27.2%) said they did not know or were unsure. Figure 10 shows the distribution of respondents by size of place of residence.¹⁸ Slightly more than one quarter (26.6%) of those able to provide a response said they lived in or near a community with less than 1,000 residents. Almost one-third of respondents (32.8%) live in or near a town of 1,000 to 10,000 people. About two in five (39.6%) said the nearest community had more than 10,000 residents.

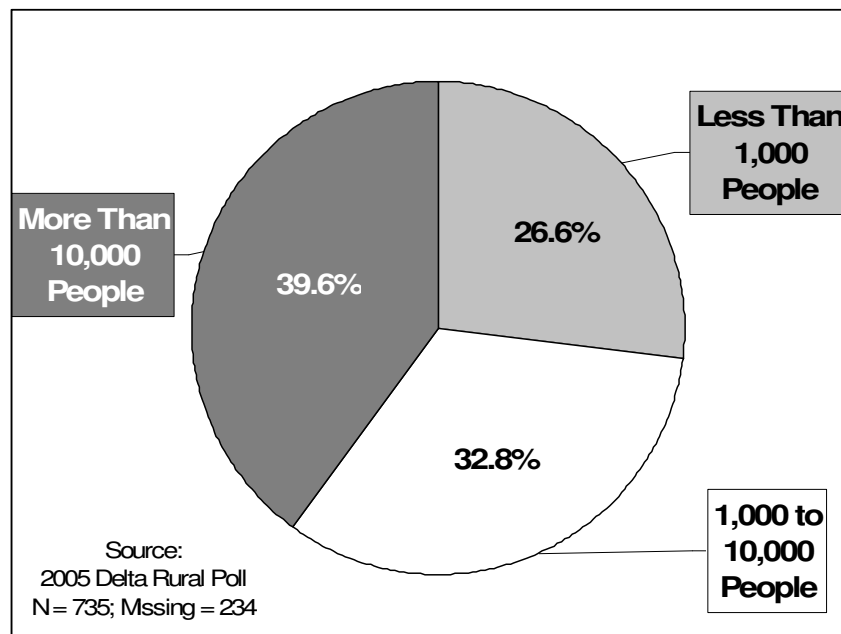


Figure 10: Size of Place of Residence of 2005 Delta Rural Poll Respondents¹⁴

¹⁸ Figure 9 shows the valid percent, i.e., the “Don’t Knows” are counted as missing data.

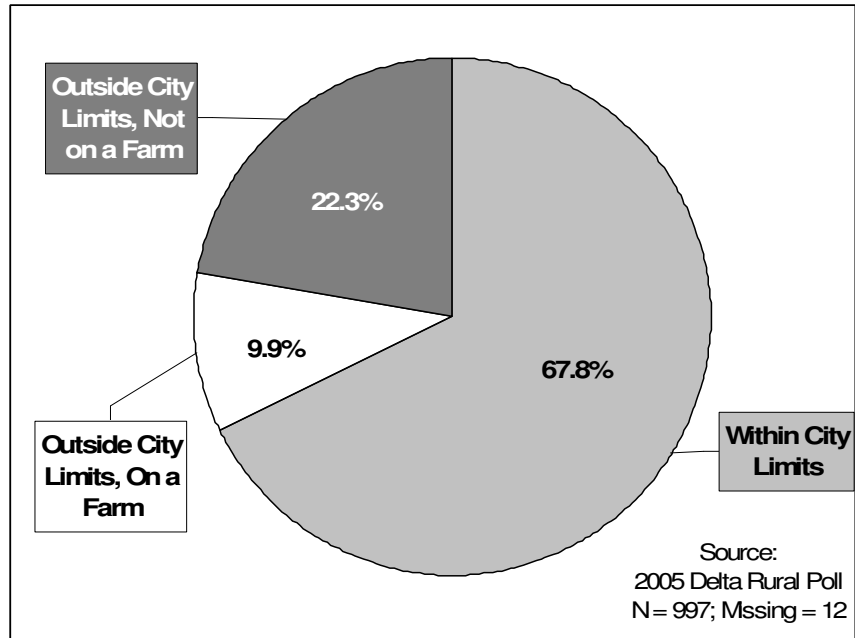


Figure 11: Type of Place of Residence of 2005 Delta Rural Poll Respondents

Type of Place Delta Rural Poll respondents were also asked if they lived within city limits, outside city limits, or on a farm. Twelve respondents were unable to provide a response. As shown in Figure 11, about two-thirds of the respondents who were able to respond said they live within the city limits of their place of residence. About one in ten (9.9%) live on a farm, and the remaining 22.3 percent live outside of city limits, but not on a farm.

Length of Residence Figure 12 shows the length of time respondents have lived in their current community of residence. All 1,009 respondents answered this question. These data show substantial stability in Delta communities, as well over half of the respondents have lived in their current communities more than twenty years. Among all respondents, 14.6 percent had lived in their community for more than 50 years, 43.2 percent have lived in their communities between 20 and 50 years, 26.7% had been in their communities between 5 and 20 years, and 15.5 percent had lived in their community for less than 5 years.

Assessing the Sample

Using the 2000 Census as a baseline, the sample drawn for the 2005 Delta Rural Poll is reasonably representative in some respects, and varies substantially from Census results in

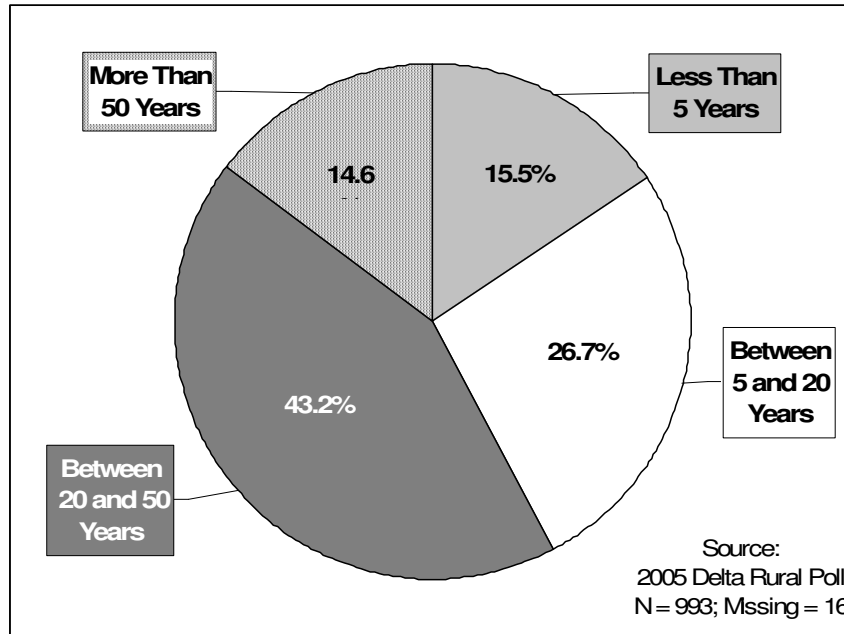


Figure 12: Length of Time 2005 Delta Rural Poll Respondents Have Lived in the Same Community

others. For example, race and income characteristics of the Delta Rural Poll sample matched the Census figures reasonably closely. Gender, on the other hand, deviated substantially from the Census results. The weighting procedure described in Appendix A accounts for this difference. The Delta Rural Poll sample overestimated those that are married and were previously married, and underestimated people that never married. The Delta Rural Poll sample is also slightly older and slightly better educated than the population as a whole; both these results represent the portion of the population that is most willing to respond to surveys of this nature.

Conclusion

The 2005 Delta Rural Poll provides a variety of valuable data on the people of the Mississippi Delta, including perceptions and attitudes on important economic and community development issues. The results included in this report illustrate the demographic conditions in the Delta, and are shown here primarily to assess the sample in comparison to the 2000 Census. In addition, this report describes the methods used in the 2005 Delta Rural Poll. Thus, the information presented in this report complements the policy and research papers issued using 2005 Delta Rural Poll data, and serves as a resource to those using these data for theses and other research purposes.

Qualitative interviews and focus groups will provide detailed information which complements the results of this survey. Qualitative data collection is scheduled to begin in late 2005, and will focus on workforce development and heritage tourism. Results from these efforts will be reported in future research and policy papers issued by the Center for Community and Economic Development, and will be available by contacting the CCED or by accessing the CCED website.

Appendix A: Weighting Procedure

The 2005 Delta Rural Poll selected respondents using a two-stage sampling process. First, households were selected using random digit dialing, then within each household a screening process was applied to randomly select a respondent. Nevertheless, only 32.4 percent of the respondents were males. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 47.8 percent of all residents of the 11 core Delta counties are male, and 46.4 percent of Delta residents age 18 and over are male. Furthermore, as shown in Table 2, African Americans are underrepresented in the Delta Rural Poll sample in all 11 counties compared to the total population, and in eight of the 11 counties compared to the adult population.

Examining these data, we decided to apply a weighting procedure similar to the one used in the 2003 Delta Rural Poll to adjust for the differences in gender and race by county. The decision was made primarily to adjust for the large discrepancy in gender. We adjusted for race as well to account for the slight under-representation of African Americans in eight counties, as well as the large aberration in Issaquena County.

Weighting procedures like this are commonly used to correct for systematic biases, and biases for gender and race are common in surveys conducted in the Mississippi Delta. The weighting procedure assessed the proportion of respondents by race and gender for each county, comparing the actual results from the 2005 Delta Rural Poll to data from the 2000 United States Census. Once a weighting variable was created, it was used on most analyses, to provide a more accurate assessment of conditions in the Delta.

To assess the need for a weighting procedure, Census data on residents of the eleven counties aged 18 and older were used to calculate the proportion of white male, white female, black male, black female, other male and other female residents.¹⁹ “Other” indicates all other races as well as people reporting more than one race. The same categories were calculated using 2005 Delta Rural Poll data. As discussed above, a comparison of these data showed that the Delta Rural Poll systematically underrepresented males and overrepresented females. Furthermore, in a

¹⁹ The Census designation “one race only” was used.

majority of counties, these tendencies were stronger for black respondents than for white respondents.

The following procedure was used to calculate the weight values. Using data from the 2000 Census, the proportion of the population aged 18 and over for 66 classifications was calculated. The classifications included the six race/gender groups (white male, white female, black male, black female, other male, other female) for each of the eleven counties. The population in each classification was divided by the total population aged 18 and over (180,913) for all counties to get the correct proportion for each category.

The number of cases that *should* be in each classification in the 2005 Delta Rural Poll sample was then calculated, using the proportions from the Census data. This was done by multiplying the proportion for each classification by 987.²⁰ The *actual* number of respondents in each classification was calculated by crosstabulating the variable for the respondent's race, recoded to combine all races except white and black into an "other" response category,²¹ and the variable for respondent's gender, then sorting these by the variable for the respondent's county of residence. For each category, the expected number calculated from Census data was divided by the actual number from the Delta Rural Poll. This gave the weight for each category. Weights were entered with nine decimal places for accuracy.

The weight variable is used in most analyses for research and policy reports. Generally, comparing analyses with and without the weight produces results that differ only slightly (see Appendix C). Nevertheless, we still use the weights to provide more accurate results.

²⁰ 987 represents the total number of respondents in the sample (1,009) minus 22 cases that were eliminated because the respondent either refused to give his/her race or because the interviewer was unable to identify the respondent's gender. These variables were coded with a value of "1" (no weight) in the weighting variable.

²¹ For "Other" categories with no respondents, the value was recorded as "1" (no weight).

**Appendix B:
Households with Telephones in the Delta**

The 2005 Delta Rural Poll used a telephone survey, which might introduce a bias in rural areas. Typically, in rural areas fewer households have telephones, and according to the USDA, the Mississippi Delta has the lowest proportion of households with telephones in the nation (ERS, 2003). Approximately 95% of all U.S. households have telephone service, while for the 11 core Mississippi Delta counties, the rate is 90.3% (see Table B1) (ERS, 2003; US Census Bureau, 2004c). Houses without a telephone are not eligible for inclusion in the sample, which presents a problem since it is likely the poorer homes that lack telephone service. Thus, a telephone survey could introduce a systematic bias into the sample. In the Delta region, however, telephone surveys still present the best available option for systematic data collection (Barton, 2004).

**Table B1:
Occupied Households with Telephone Service in 11 Mississippi Delta Counties**

County	Total Population	Number of Occupied Housing Units	Percent of Households with Telephone Service
Bolivar	40,633	13,776	88.7
Coahoma	30,622	10,553	91.2
Humphreys	11,206	3,765	87.8
Issaquena	2,274	726	85.4
Leflore	37,947	12,956	91.2
Quitman	10,117	3,565	87.7
Sharkey	6,580	2,163	85.9
Sunflower	34,369	9,637	90.6
Tallahatchie	14,903	5,263	86.0
Tunica	9,227	3,258	89.3
Washington	62,977	22,158	93.0
Total	260,855	87,820	90.3

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2004c.

**Appendix C:
Comparison of Results from the
2003 and 2005 Delta Rural Polls**

The tables in Appendix C show comparisons of the 2003 and the 2005 Delta Rural Poll surveys for 11 variables. These tables also compare frequencies with and without weighting to account for gender and race by county.

**Table C1
Age of Respondents:
Comparison of the 2003 and 2005 Delta Rural Polls**

Age	2003 Delta Rural Poll		2005 Delta Rural Poll	
	Unweighted	Weighted	Unweighted	Weighted
18 – 29	16.5	17.5	14.9	15.0
30 – 44	26.4	27.7	23.4	23.0
45 – 59	29.4	29.4	30.7	31.9
60 – 74	17.1	16.5	20.2	20.3
75+	10.7	8.9	10.8	9.7
N	796	789	984	980
Missing	13	12	25	22

**Table C2
Gender of Respondents:
Comparison of the 2003 and 2005 Delta Rural Polls**

Gender	2003 Delta Rural Poll		2005 Delta Rural Poll	
	Unweighted	Weighted	Unweighted	Weighted
Female	71.0	53.7	67.6	55.2
Male	29.0	46.2	32.4	44.8
N	807	799	1007	1000
Missing	2	2	2	2

Table C3
Race of Respondents:
Comparison of the 2003 and 2005 Delta Rural Polls

Race	2003 Delta Rural Poll		2005 Delta Rural Poll	
	Unweighted	Weighted	Unweighted	Weighted
Black	60.3	62.8	61.3	62.5
White	39.9	36.6	37.5	36.4
Other	0.9	0.6	1.2	1.1
N	808	800	989	982
Missing	1	1	20	19

Table C4
Marital Status of Respondents:
Comparison of the 2003 and 2005 Delta Rural Polls

Marital Status	2003 Delta Rural Poll		2005 Delta Rural Poll	
	Unweighted	Weighted	Unweighted	Weighted
Married/Couple	45.3	46.1	43.4	44.2
Single/Previously Married	28.7	25.6	29.2	27.8
Single/Never Married	26.0	28.3	27.3	28.1
N	808	800	1006	999
Missing	1	1	3	3

Table C5
Educational Attainment of Respondents:
Comparison of the 2003 and 2005 Delta Rural Polls

Educational Attainment	2003 Delta Rural Poll		2005 Delta Rural Poll	
	Unweighted	Weighted	Unweighted	Weighted
High School Diploma or Less	50.1	50.5	47.6	48.2
Some College/ Associates Degree	25.8	25.3	26.9	25.6
Bachelors Degree	16.5	16.2	16.8	17.3
Graduate Degree	7.6	7.9	8.7	8.9
N	805	798	997	990
Missing	4	4	12	11

Table C6
Employment Status of Respondents:
Comparison of the 2003 and 2005 Delta Rural Polls

Employment Status	2003 Delta Rural Poll		2005 Delta Rural Poll	
	Unweighted	Weighted	Unweighted	Weighted
Employed	59.5	62.1	60.5	61.6
Not Employed	40.5	37.9	39.5	38.4
N	809	801	1008	1001
Missing	0	0	1	1

Table C7
Total 2002 Household Income of Respondents:
Comparison of the 2003 and 2005 Delta Rural Polls

Income	2003 Delta Rural Poll		2005 Delta Rural Poll	
	Unweighted	Weighted	Unweighted	Weighted
More Than \$60,000	14.7	15.6	13.1	13.5
\$30,000 to \$60,000	21.5	21.8	26.3	27.7
Less Than \$30,000	63.8	62.5	60.7	58.8
N	679	675	765	766
Missing	130	126	244	236

Table C8
Percent of Respondents by County of Residence:
Comparison of the 2003 and 2005 Delta Rural Polls

County	2003 Delta Rural Poll		2005 Delta Rural Poll	
	Unweighted	Weighted	Unweighted	Weighted
Bolivar	14.8	16.0	12.2	15.7
Coahoma	13.2	11.4	13.9	11.7
Humphreys	2.6	4.1	4.6	4.2
Issaquena	3.7	0.9	3.0	1.0
Leflore	16.2	14.7	14.1	14.6
Quitman	2.5	3.8	4.1	3.8
Sharkey	2.0	2.4	1.6	2.5
Sunflower	10.5	13.6	11.8	13.6
Tallahatchie	7.9	5.8	6.6	5.6
Tunica	2.3	3.5	3.6	3.5
Washington	24.2	23.8	24.7	23.8
N	809	801	1009	1002
Missing	0	0	0	0

Table C9
Size of Place of Respondents' Residence:
Comparison of the 2003 and 2005 Delta Rural Polls

Size of Place of Residence	2003 Delta Rural Poll		2005 Delta Rural Poll	
	Unweighted	Weighted	Unweighted	Weighted
More Than 10,000	38.0	39.0	39.6	40.7
1,000 to 10,000	33.7	34.9	32.8	32.7
Less Than 1,000	28.2	26.1	27.6	26.6
N	581	576	735	742
Missing	228	225	274	260

Table C10
Type of Place of Respondents' Residence:
Comparison of the 2003 and 2005 Delta Rural Polls

Place of Residence	2003 Delta Rural Poll		2005 Delta Rural Poll	
	Unweighted	Weighted	Unweighted	Weighted
Within City Limits	67.4	69.5	67.8	69.5
Outside City Limits, On a Farm	11.1	10.1	9.9	9.0
Outside City Limits, Not on a Farm	21.5	20.4	22.3	21.6
N	809	801	997	990
Missing	0	0	12	12

Table C11
Length of Time Respondents Have Lived in the Same Community:
Comparison of the 2003 and 2005 Delta Rural Polls

Length of Time of Residence	2003 Delta Rural Poll		2005 Delta Rural Poll	
	Unweighted	Weighted	Unweighted	Weighted
More Than 50 Years	16.6	15.1	14.6	14.6
Between 20 and 50 Years	43.3	43.7	43.2	42.8
Between 5 and 20 Years	27.6	28.3	26.7	27.1
Less Than 5 Years	12.6	12.9	15.5	15.5
N	802	794	993	987
Missing	7	7	16	15

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**Research Papers from the
Center for Community and Economic Development**

Research Paper 04-01

Barton, Alan W. *The 2003 Delta Rural Poll: History, Methods and Characteristics of the Sample*. Research Paper No. 04-01, Center for Community and Economic Development. Delta State University, Cleveland, MS. August, 2004.

Research Paper 05-01

Barton, Alan W. *The 2005 Delta Rural Poll: Methods and Characteristics of the Sample*. Research Paper No. 05-01, Center for Community and Economic Development. Delta State University, Cleveland, MS. August, 2005.

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The author thanks Albert B. Nylander III, Amy Owen and John Green for helpful comments on a draft of this paper.

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