
Mail Survey Methods

UFSRC has conducted numerous surveys by mail or with a mail component as part of a mixed-mode protocol. One of the largest of these is the [Women and Infants Survey for Health \(WISH\)](#) conducted for the Florida Department of Health in 2013 and 2014.

For our mail surveys, we try to follow the best practices in the survey industry.

The only work to be subcontracted is the printing and outgoing mailing of the mail component. The following steps are taken to assure that this part of the work is done in a manner that meets the mailing schedule; protects the confidentiality of sampled individuals; uses defined message content, design, and format; and presents a professional impression that reflects positively on the investigator and the University.

1. We use a local service provider who has a solid track record of more than 10 years of providing such services, including patient experience studies.
2. Selected samples are transmitted only via our secure web-based portal that requires authentication for the uploading of sample files and delivery of datasets, providing HIPAA-compliant protection for our clients and colleagues outside the UF system.
3. The subcontractor runs the sample file addresses through their professional databases to check for those that do not conform to specifications, are not listed in the USPS delivery files, or have a change of address on file.
4. For every piece of mail that is sent out as part of the survey process, a page proof is provided in a timely manner.
5. We make multiple site visits to the subcontractor facility, including some that are unannounced.
6. The subcontractor delivers prepared mailings to the University mail services, so that the receipt showing a mailing cost additionally provides verification of the date of the mailing for each wave.
7. We use “seeded mailings” on a regular basis, having some mailings sent to a UFSRC staff member at a residential address in order to inspect the product that respondents will receive.

Incoming mail is handled in-house at our facility. Mail is received into a locked mailbox dedicated for survey receipt only, with returned items retrieved by professional survey staff and promptly checked into our system. Returned paper questionnaires are kept in a room behind two sets of locked doors.

Mail survey data are key-entered by trained staff who have experience as telephone interviewers and are thus well grounded in protecting confidentiality of sampled individuals, assigning appropriate disposition codes, and following the manual for that survey to solve discrepancies (such as how to code an item in which more than one box was checked).

We are in the process of installing Optical Character Recognition scanning technology as part of our facility.