

The Meth Epidemic



The Changing
Demographics of
Methamphetamine

NACO *National Association of Counties*

The Voice of America's Counties

August 2007

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About NACo – The Voice of America's Counties

The National Association of Counties (NACo) is the only national organization that represents county governments in the United States. Founded in 1935, NACo provides essential services to the nation's 3,066 counties. NACo advances issues with a unified voice before the federal government, improves the public's understanding of county government, assists counties in finding and sharing innovative solutions through education and research, and provides value-added services to save counties and taxpayers money. For more information about NACo, visit www.naco.org.

National Association of Counties. (2007). The meth epidemic: The Changing Demographics of Methamphetamine. Washington, D.C.: National Association of Counties, Research Division.

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Executive Summary

In July 2005, the National Association of Counties released its first two surveys on the methamphetamine epidemic. At that time, the movement of the drug appeared to be from the west to the East. As it has spread, it is affecting more and more communities including urban, rural and suburban counties. In addition, there have been significant changes in types of users and methods used to acquire the drug. County governments have been struggling for years to address this problem at the local level and pushing to make other levels of government aware of its impact.

Counties continue to struggle to raise revenue to meet the needs of their residents and have seen their tax dollars have to be diverted from providing needed services to paying for lab cleanup and closure, running prisons overcrowded with inmates arrested for drug related crimes and aiding the children flooding the social service systems because of the meth abuse by their parents. At the same time, counties have been facing a major challenge of how to provide treatment that works for abusers who want to stop. Counties are working to increase funding for law enforcement, treatment, out of home placement programs and joint task forces to address this ongoing epidemic.

In response to NACo's earlier surveys and lobbying by counties across the nation, the federal government passed precursor legislation that became effective in September 2006. Although several states had previously passed similar legislation, this was the first recognition by the federal government that a multifaceted approach to solving this crisis is necessary.

Counties are required to address many of the problems that meth abuse creates. Through surveys conducted in June 2005, January 2006 and June 2006, NACo has been able to spotlight these issues and help other levels of government understand the impact that this epidemic is having on county programs and activities. This sixth survey in the series once again revisits county law enforcement officials across the nation to ask about the changes they have seen over time. NACo was particularly interested in the impact of precursor legislation on the availability of meth and its impact on local law enforcement activities.

The survey questions were designed to capture changes that have occurred in relation to the meth epidemic; the changes over time in the characteristics of abusers; the presence of home made meth labs; and the differences in how the drug is being made available to abusers.

The telephone survey was conducted by National Research, Inc. of Washington, DC, which contacted 500 county law enforcement officials in 43 states. The survey reveals:

The Changing Demographics of Meth

- **Meth is still the number one drug problem**
 - Forty seven percent of county sheriffs report that meth is their number one drug problem. That is more than cocaine (21%) and marijuana (22%) combined.
- **Crime related to meth abuse continues to increase**
 - Fifty five percent of sheriffs report increases in robberies and burglaries during the last year.
- **Users of meth are changing.**
 - Sixty percent of sheriffs report increased use by women and **49 percent** report increased use by teens during the last three years.
- **Meth abuse is not decreasing**
 - Fifty percent of sheriffs report abuse of the drug has stayed the same and thirty percent report that it has increased.
- **Meth abuse continues to increase the workload for public safety staff**
 - Sixty percent of sheriffs report an increased workload because of meth abuse and **43 percent** report that they are paying more overtime.
- **The federal precursor legislation is working**
 - Eighty one percent of county sheriffs report that ability to produce meth locally is down.
- **Meth availability continues to grow**
 - Even with federal precursor legislation, **38 percent** of sheriffs report an increase in the availability of meth. Largely because of importation from out of state and from Mexico.

The Meth Epidemic

The Changing Demographics of Methamphetamine

In 2005 and 2006, in response to heightened concern by many county officials, the National Association of Counties conducted several surveys on the impact of methamphetamine on county programs and services. The results of these surveys were instrumental in increasing the awareness of the methamphetamine epidemic and the passage of national laws regulating the purchase of precursor drugs. After federal precursor legislation took effect in late 2006, many counties reported decreases in the number of illegal labs in their jurisdictions. However, usage and abuse continues. According to various reports, both actual and anecdotal, methamphetamine production is changing as are methamphetamine abusers. In June 2007, the National Association of Counties received the results of a brief telephone survey conducted to help capture the changes in the methamphetamine epidemic since the 2005 survey and to determine if legislative changes and increased awareness have created changes in the patterns of methamphetamine manufacture and acquisition. In addition, the survey revealed information about changes in users of the drug and local public safety consequences.

Methodology

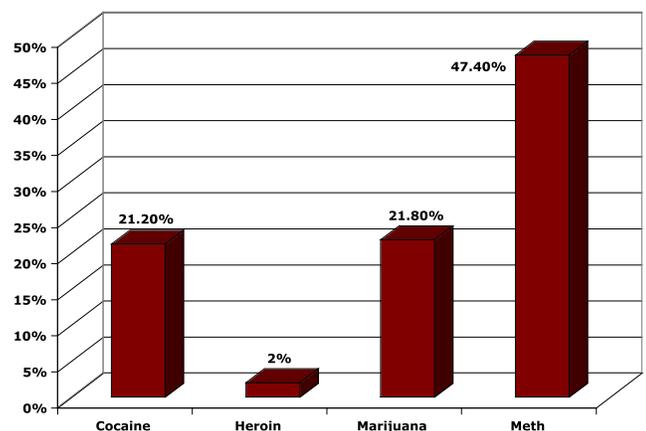
In late May 2007, the National Association of Counties commissioned National Research, Inc. to make telephone calls to a random sample group of 500 sheriffs pulled from a national database of more than 3,000. During these telephone calls, sheriffs and police chiefs or their representatives were asked 18 questions about how methamphetamine abuse is changing and how it is affecting their counties. Responses were received from counties in 43 states.

What is the Biggest Illegal Drug Problem?

County law enforcement officers (sheriffs) were asked which illegal drug was the biggest problem for their county based on drug related arrests that occurred during the last year. **Twenty one percent** report that cocaine is their biggest illegal drug problem, and **22 percent** report that marijuana is their biggest problem.

However, **47.4 percent** report that the biggest drug problem in their counties is methamphetamine. In a similar survey conducted in 2006, **48 percent** of responding sheriffs reported that methamphetamine was their biggest problem.

Percent Reporting Biggest Illegal Drug



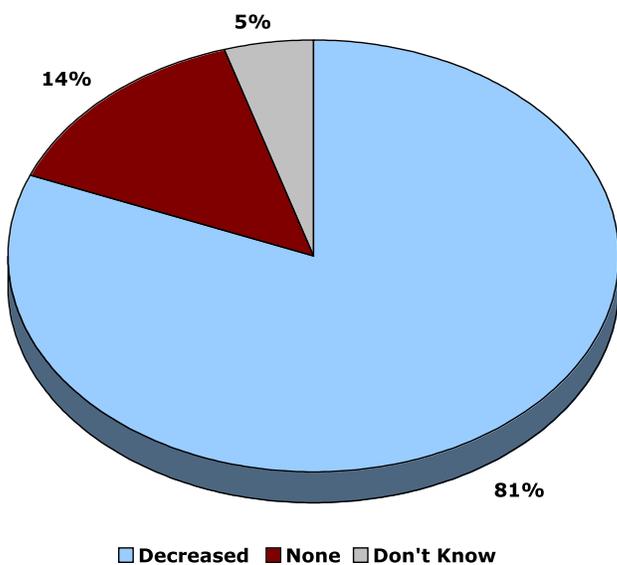
In the North West, **75 percent** of the responding sheriffs list methamphetamine as the biggest illegal drug, followed by sheriffs in South Central (**68%**), South West (**61%**) and North Central (**52%**).

Forty one percent of the sheriffs report that methamphetamine arrests have increased in their counties during the last year. In both the South Central and South West Regions, **61 percent** of the sheriffs indicate that arrests have increased. Of those sheriffs reporting an increase in arrests, **36 percent** indicate that up to **10 percent** of the arrests in their counties were methamphetamine related. Interestingly, **53 percent** of counties in the North East and **42 percent** of the counties in the South East report that up to **10 percent** of their arrests are methamphetamine related, indicating that the epidemic is indeed moving to the East. More than **6 percent** report that between **75 percent** and **100 percent** of arrests were related to methamphetamine abuse. The majority of those (**77%**) reporting this high incidence were in counties below 25,000 population.

Precursor Legislation

Starting in early 2003, various states and counties began passing legislation that limits the ability to purchase large quantities of the ingredients necessary to manufacture methamphetamine. In September 2006, federal legislation went into effect that provided national regulations that limit the availability of these precursor drugs for purchase. In order to gauge the impact of the precursor legislation, sheriffs were asked if this legislation had reduced the ability of abusers to manufacture methamphetamine. **Eighty one percent** of the responding sheriffs say that these new laws have reduced manufacturing in their counties. In the South West region, only **65 percent** of sheriffs report that precursor limitations have reduced the ability to obtain methamphetamine, the lowest of all the regions.

Precursors Impact on Small Manufacturing



Many of these responding sheriffs report that importation of methamphetamine has increased. **Sixty-two percent** of the sheriffs say that out of state importation of methamphetamine has increased, while **56 percent** report that Mexican drug importation has also increased. **Ninety three percent** of counties in the North West report that out of state importation has increased, and **75 percent** of counties in the South Central Region report that Mexican importation has kept the drug available. **Twenty nine percent** report that importation from some other source has also increased in their counties.

Availability of Methamphetamine

Even in light of the effectiveness of federal and state precursor legislation, **38 percent** of responding sheriffs say that the availability of methamphetamine in their counties has increased. In both the South Central and South West regions, **52 percent** of sheriffs report increases in the availability of the drug. Of 191 counties that report an increase, **62 percent** say that the drug is more available because its distribution patterns are currently mimicking the distribution streams of other established illegal drugs. In the South East, **84 percent** of sheriffs report that methamphetamine is now using the same distribution streams as other illegal drugs. **Forty percent** report that the increased importation of raw products from Mexico has helped make the drug more available and **65 percent** report that the importation of methamphetamine from Mexico had made it more readily accessible to abusers. In the North West and the South Central regions, **80 percent** and **81 percent**, respectively, of the sheriffs report importation of the drug from Mexico is keeping it available to abusers.

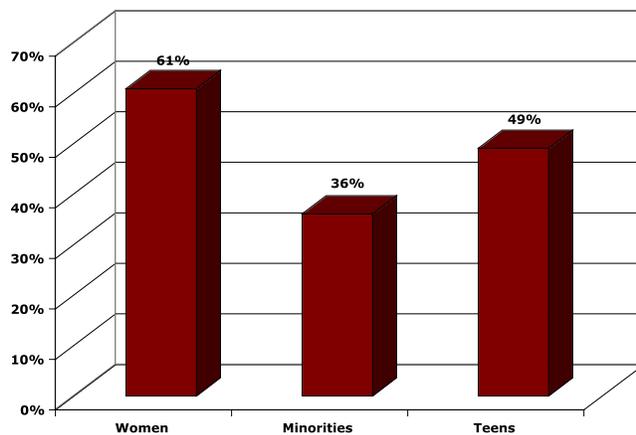
Changing Demographics

One of the major concerns about methamphetamine abuse in the country is that more people, and a wider range of people, are becoming addicted. In the past, methamphetamine had been depicted as a blue collar, lower middle class drug. Most of the users were whites between 18 and 34 years of age. According to responding sheriffs, this may be changing. **Sixty one percent** of sheriffs report that they have seen an increase during the last three years in the number of women abusing methamphetamine. An even larger percentage of sheriffs in the North West (**72%**) and the South West (**71%**) regions report such an increase. **Forty nine percent** report an increase in teenage abusers during that same period, but **70 percent** of sheriffs in the North West have seen this change. In addition, those who are abusing are changing in another way, since **36 percent** report increased abuse of the drug by minorities. In the South West and South Central regions, more than 50 percent of sheriffs see increased use by minorities, lending credibility to anecdotal evidence that use is increasing among Native Americans and Hispanics. **Ninety eight percent** of those counties reporting an increase in abuse by women have populations of less than 250,000, and **62 percent** had populations of less than 25,000.

Of the 245 counties that report an increase in teen abusers, **58 percent** had populations below 25,000 and

82 percent had populations below 50,000. Of the 180 counties that report an increase in use of methamphetamine by minorities, **63 percent** were in counties with less than 25,000 population.

Percent Reporting Changes in Users



Gangs and Methamphetamine

Although only **26 percent** of county sheriffs report that there is a gang presence in their counties, **81 percent** of counties with a population above 100,000 report having gangs, and **100 percent** of counties with a population of more than 250,000 report that there is a gang presence. The data indicate that gangs may still be primarily an urban activity. However, **15 percent** of counties with populations below 25,000 report a gang presence.

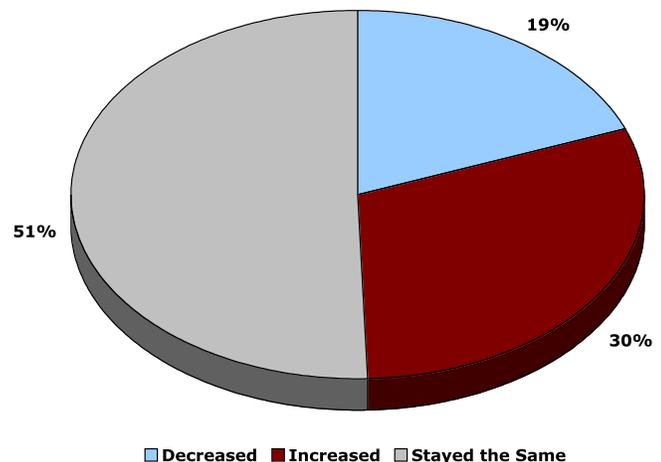
Of the 131 counties that report that they have a gang presence in their counties, **30 percent** report that those gangs are distributing methamphetamines, **33 percent** report that those gangs are importing methamphetamines, but only **15 percent** say that those gangs are responsible for the manufacture of methamphetamine.

Is Methamphetamine Abuse on the Decline?

Sheriffs in **80 percent** of the responding counties report that methamphetamine abuse has not decreased in the last year, while **19 percent** report that it has. Even with the existence of the federal precursor legislation that severely limits the ability to acquire the ingredients for manufacturing methamphetamine, **50 percent** of counties report that use has stayed the same as in previous years, and **30 percent** of counties report that use has increased. More sheriffs in the South West re-

gion reported increased abuse (**55%**) than in any other regions. More sheriffs in the North East region (**60%**) reported that abuse stayed the same than in other regions.

Changes in Abuse Last Year



Incarceration

Many county jails are facing overcrowding because of various factors, one of which is the percentage of crimes that are methamphetamine related. **Forty two percent** of sheriffs report that **up to 10 percent** of their inmates are incarcerated because of methamphetamine related crimes. **Fifty three percent** of sheriffs in the North East region report this same statistic, the highest percentage in the country. **Eight percent** report that between **50 and 75 percent** of inmates are methamphetamine related, and **6 percent** report that between **75 and 100 percent** of inmates are in jail because of methamphetamine related crimes. New Mexico, at **50 percent**, has the highest percentage of responding counties reporting that between **75 and 100 percent** of incarcerations are methamphetamine related. **Twenty percent** of responding sheriffs report that these drug related incarcerations have led to overcrowding of their jails.

Increase in Crime

Sheriffs were also asked about any increases in various crimes during the last year because of the presence of methamphetamine in their counties. Simple assaults increases were reported by **42 percent** of counties, domestic violence and child abuse and endangerment increases were reported by **40 percent**, robbery and burglary increases reported by **55 percent**, forgery increases by **37 percent**, fraud increases by **33 percent**

and identity theft increases by **28 percent**. These percentages vary dramatically by region. **Fifty eight percent** of South Western sheriffs report an increase in domestic violence and **49 percent** report an increase in identity thefts. **Sixty three percent** of North Western sheriffs report an increase in child abuse and endangerment and also report a **70 percent** increase in robberies or burglaries. **Fifty seven percent** of sheriffs in the South Central region report an increase in forgery.

More than **87 percent** of the counties reporting increases in domestic violence are largely rural jurisdictions with population of less than 50,000. Similarly, more than **85 percent** of the child abuse and endangerment increases are in these same sized counties.

When sheriffs were asked if methamphetamine abuse caused an increased workload for their public safety staff during the preceding year, **60 percent** said yes. Paying more overtime as the result of this increased workload was reported by **43 percent** and longer shifts were reported by **45 percent**. **Forty two percent** reported that they had changed work assignments because of the presence of methamphetamine abuse in the county.

Newspapers continue to report the appearance of methamphetamine in different forms, (such as flavored with strawberry quick or other flavorings that are targeting a more youthful audience.) While nationally only **18 percent** of the sheriffs report the presence of colored or flavored methamphetamine in their communities, in the South West region **26 percent** report the presence of this new form of the drug. Nationally, **24 percent** of sheriffs also report that they are seeing other illegal drugs mixed with methamphetamine.

Rehabilitation

Only **24 percent** of sheriffs report that their counties facilitate or sponsor a methamphetamine rehabilitation center or program. By region, the largest percentage of sheriffs that report having a facility (**35%**) is in the South West. Of those 363 counties that do not have a facility, **45 percent** say lack of funding is the primary reason why they do not provide this vital service.

NACo Survey

Methamphetamine Update Public Safety

In 2005 and 2006, in response to heightened concern by many county officials, The National Association of Counties conducted several surveys on the impact of methamphetamine on county programs and services. The results of these surveys were instrumental in increasing the awareness of the meth epidemic and the passage of national laws regulating the purchase of precursor drugs. The National Association of Counties is again conducting a brief telephone survey to revisit the issue and to determine how these legislative changes and increased awareness have created changes in methamphetamine manufacture, acquisition and usage. Can you take a few minutes to answer questions that will provide information for a national report that will be released later this summer?

1. Based on illegal drug related arrests in the last year, which of the following drugs is the biggest problem in your county?

Cocaine	1
Heroin	2
Marijuana	3
Methamphetamine	4
Other	5
Don't know	6
Refused	7

2. Have methamphetamine related arrests increased in your county during the last year?

Yes	1
No	2
(Vol) Don't know	3
(Vol) Refused	4

3. In your best estimate, what percentage of the total arrests made in your county during the last year are methamphetamine related?

0 to 10%	1
10 to 20%	2
20 to 30%	3
30 to 40%	4
40 to 50%	5
50 to 75%	6

75 to 100%	7
Don't know	8
Refused	9

4. Have precursor restrictions on the sale of methamphetamine ingredients, such as pseudophedrine, reduced the ability of abusers in your county to manufacture methamphetamine?

Yes	1
No	2
(Vol) Don't know	3
(Vol) Refused	4

5. As precursor legislation has made ingredients for home made methamphetamine more difficult to acquire, has the importation of methamphetamine in your county increased?

	Y	N	DK	RF
a) because of out of state importation	1	2	3	4
b) because of Mexican drug importation	1	2	3	4
c) because of other foreign drug importation	1	2	3	4
d) Other	1	2	3	4

6a. Has your county experienced an increase in the availability of methamphetamine?

Yes	1
No	2
(Vol) Don't know	3
(Vol) Refused	4

6b. (ASK IF Q6A=YES) Is that increase in the availability of methamphetamine...

	Y	N	DK	RF
a) because it is currently mimicking distribution of other drugs	1	2	3	4
b) because of increased importation of raw products from Mexico	1	2	3	4
c) because of increased importation of methamphetamine from Mexico	1	2	3	4

7. During the last three years, have any of the following statements been true in your county? (Check any that apply)

Y N DK RF

- | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| a) More women are abusing methamphetamines | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| b) More teens are abusing methamphetamines | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| c) More minorities are abusing methamphetamines | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

8a. Is there a gang presence in your county?

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Yes | 1 |
| No (skip to Q9) | 2 |
| Don't know (skip to Q9) | 3 |
| Refused (skip to Q9) | 4 |

8b. (ASK IF Q6A=YES & Q8A=YES) Has gang presence in your county contributed to the increased availability of methamphetamine because...? (Check any that apply)

Y N DK RF

- | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| a) Gangs are distributing methamphetamines | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| b) Gangs are importing methamphetamines | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| c) Gangs are manufacturing methamphetamines | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

9. Which of the following best describes the abuse of methamphetamine in your county during the last year?

- | | |
|---|---|
| Methamphetamine abuse has decreased | 1 |
| Methamphetamine abuse has increased | 2 |
| Methamphetamine abuse has stayed the same | 3 |
| Don't know | 4 |
| Refused | 5 |

10. What percentage of current county jail inmates are incarcerated because of methamphetamine related crimes?

- | | |
|------------|---|
| 0 to 10% | 1 |
| 10 to 20% | 2 |
| 20 to 30% | 3 |
| 30 to 40% | 4 |
| 40 to 50% | 5 |
| 50 to 75% | 6 |
| 75 to 100% | 7 |

- | | |
|------------|---|
| Don't know | 8 |
| Refused | 9 |

11. (ASK IF Q2=YES) Has the increase in arrests for methamphetamine related crimes resulted in jail overcrowding in your county?

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| Yes | 1 |
| No | 2 |
| (Vol) Don't know | 3 |
| (Vol) Refused | 4 |

12. Have any of the following crimes increased during the last year because of the presence of methamphetamines in your county?

Y N DK RF

- | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| a) Domestic violence | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| b) Child abuse and endangerment | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| c) Simple Assault | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| d) Murder | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| e) Robbery or Burglary | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| f) Identity Theft | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| g) Fraud | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| h) Forgery | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

13. Has the abuse of methamphetamines in your county increased the workload of public safety staff during the last year?

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| Yes | 1 |
| No | 2 |
| (Vol) Don't know | 3 |
| (Vol) Refused | 4 |

14. (ASK IF Q13=YES) Which of the following are happening as a result of increased workloads due to abuse of methamphetamine? (Check all that apply).

Y N DK RF

- | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| a) Paying more overtime | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| b) Longer shifts | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| c) Changed work assignments | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| d) Other | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

15. Has your county seen the presence of any of the following trends in the last two years? (Check all that apply.)

Y N DK RF

- | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| a) Colored or flavored methamphetamine | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| b) Other drugs laced with methamphetamine | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| c) Rise of abuse of methamphetamines among gay men | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| d) Other trends | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

16. Does your county facilitate or sponsor a methamphetamine rehabilitation center or program?

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Yes (skip to closing) | 1 |
| No | 2 |
| (Vol) Don't know (skip to closing) | 3 |
| (Vol) Refused (skip to closing) | 4 |

17. (IF Q16=NO, ASK) What is the primary reason why your county does not facilitate or sponsor a methamphetamine rehabilitation center or program?

- | | |
|---------------------------|---|
| Lack of funding | 1 |
| Lack of resources | 2 |
| Lack of skilled personnel | 3 |
| Other | 4 |
| Don't know | 5 |
| Refused | 6 |

Thank you very much for your time – the results should be posted on the NACo website (www.naco.org) in a few months.

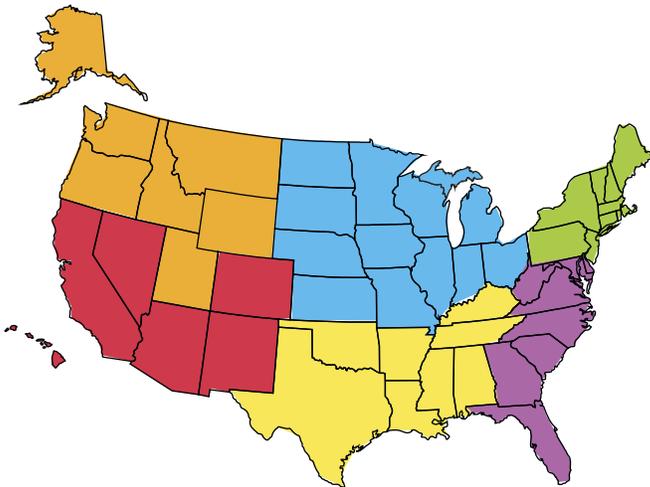
Appendix

Responses by population

Counties	
Below 10,000	165
10,000 to 24,999	150
25,000 to 49,999	109
50,000 to 99,999	32
100,000 to 249,999	29
250,000 to 499,999	9
500,000 and above	6

Responses by Region

States	
North Central	10
North East	12
North West	5
South Central	3
South East	7
South West	6



North Central
North East
North West
South Central
South East
South West

Responses by State

Alabama	4
Arkansas	12
California	3
Colorado	10
Florida	7
Georgia	15
Hawaii	1
Idaho	16
Illinois	16
Indiana	19
Iowa	17
Kansas	23
Kentucky	32
Louisiana	2
Maryland	2
Massachusetts	1
Michigan	13
Minnesota	13
Mississippi	12
Missouri	12
Montana	8
Nebraska	26
Nevada	4
New Hampshire	1
New Jersey	1
New Mexico	8
New York	12
North Carolina	17
North Dakota	17
Ohio	10
Oklahoma	7
Oregon	9
Pennsylvania	9
South Carolina	7
South Dakota	23
Tennessee	15
Texas	50
Utah	5
Vermont	2
Virginia	11
Washington	7
West Virginia	6
Wisconsin	12
Wyoming	3
Total	500

States by Region

Region	State
South East	Alabama
South Central	Arkansas
South West	California
South West	Colorado
South East	Florida
South East	Georgia
South West	Hawaii
North West	Idaho
North Central	Illinois
North East	Indiana
North Central	Iowa
North Central	Kansas
North East	Kentucky
South Central	Louisiana
North East	Maryland
North East	Massachusetts
North Central	Michigan
North Central	Minnesota
South East	Mississippi
North Central	Missouri
North West	Montana
North Central	Nebraska
South West	Nevada
North East	New Hampshire
North East	New Jersey
South West	New Mexico
North East	New York
South East	North Carolina
North Central	North Dakota
North East	Ohio
South Central	Oklahoma
North West	Oregon
North East	Pennsylvania
South East	South Carolina
North Central	South Dakota
South East	Tennessee
South Central	Texas
South West	Utah
North East	Vermont
North East	Virginia
North West	Washington
North East	West Virginia
North Central	Wisconsin
North West	Wyoming



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