Overview of Data Collection and Preparation for CFI COVID-19 Survey of Consumers Public Release

This document contains information about the collection and processing of data made available as part of the *CFI COVID-19 Survey of Consumers* public data release.

The survey collected responses from a cross-sectional sample of U.S. adults. The survey was conducted by Dynata, an online market research firm providing access to survey panels that are nationally representative of the United States. Respondents completed a survey designed by CFI that collected information on income, employment, and financial security both before and after the COVID-19 crisis began. Responses were managed throughout the survey process to ensure appropriate representation of certain demographic groups (e.g., those with higher and lower incomes, urban and rural residents, and self-employed individuals).

To account for variation in the distribution of core demographic characteristics across the surveys and to generate more level wave-to-wave comparisons, we have reweighted the results of each survey wave in these chart packs and data files to reflect the income, age, and gender distributions of the 2020 American Community Survey. After reweighting, each wave reflects identical distributions of income, age, and gender.

Demographic Data

Four demographic categories are included in the data release: age, income, gender, and race/ethnicity. Age, income, and gender were collected directly from survey respondents in each of the 12 survey waves (questions reproduced from the Wave 12 survey appear in the appendix). Respondents who were less than 18 years old or did not provide information about their income were rejected from the population.

Due to the potential effects of the pandemic on respondents' ability to earn income, we used 2019 personal income as the baseline income value we collected, rather than current income at the time of the survey. This allowed data analysis to be based on income information that was less likely to have been affected by the crisis. Respondents were selected from a series of income ranges, which were modified once during the survey waves. In Waves 1 – 7, the lowest income range available was "Less than $20,000"; in Waves 8 – 12, an option of "I had no personal income in 2019" was added to identify those without income in the response population. In practice, the percentage of those selecting the new option is too small to analyze, and we include those in the less-than-$20,000 group.

Race and ethnicity data were appended to the results files by the survey vendor based on internal data they maintain on the respondents.

For visual clarity, the charts provided in the data release reflect condensed groupings of age, income, and race/ethnicity variables. Data tables are provided for the full detail of each field.

Ability to Work

For all respondents who reported that they considered themselves currently employed, we collected information in each wave about their current ability to work at their primary employment. This included responses designed to measure trends in onsite vs. remote work, normal vs. reduced hours worked, and job losses for a variety of reasons. Two response options ("Primary employment is closed; I am still being paid" and "I stopped working because of a COVID-19 diagnosis, a possible COVID-19 exposure, or an underlying condition (either myself or someone in my household).") were removed as response options beginning in Wave 8 (conducted in April 2021) due to low or inconsistent response volume; therefore, there are no data on these options in Waves 8 – 12.

Financial Security

Respondents received two questions relating to their subjective evaluation of their financial security. The first asked them to report their level of concern about making ends meet over the next three, six, nine, and 12 months using a 5-point Likert scale. Data are provided in this repository for the three-month and 12-month categories. The second question asked respondents whether the COVID-19 crisis had affected their answer to the previous question and is included here as well.