

The Gallup Organization

PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY

**NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR
THE CONSERVATION OF
CULTURAL PROPERTY**

Awareness Study

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**The Gallup Organization
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I. INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES

The Gallup Organization was commissioned by the National Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Property (NIC) to conduct a public opinion and awareness study. To gauge the nature of opinion and level of awareness, a quantitative telephone survey was conducted among a random sample of American adults. The key findings of the survey are presented in this report.

The primary goals of the research are 1) to examine public attitudes toward the functions and responsibilities of institutions dedicated to the preservation of cultural property: museums, libraries and historic houses; and 2) to assess the level of broad public involvement in cultural preservation, either through patronage and membership in these institutions or through personal care of heirlooms. A secondary goal is to probe awareness levels of four cultural preservation programs and resources.

The specific objectives of the study, which are operationalized in the survey instrument, include the following:

- To measure public attitudes towards the functions and responsibilities of museums, libraries and historic houses;
- To gauge the prevalence of irreplaceable belonging/heirloom ownership among the general public, and the proportion of those citizens who take steps to preserve these items;
- To measure the level of awareness of various preservation resources and programs;
- To gauge the prevalence of public contributions to museums, libraries or historic houses, through recalled donations and plans to donate in the future; and
- To estimate the frequency of public visits to, and membership in, museums, libraries and historic houses.

II. METHODOLOGY

To achieve the study objectives, a telephone survey was conducted among 1002 adults, 18 years of age and over, living in the United States. Interviews were conducted in May and June, 1996, from Gallup's central interviewing facility in Lincoln, Nebraska.

A three call-back design was utilized, meaning that any unresolved phone number in the initial sample is called back twice before it is discarded. A phone number becomes resolved when 1) a survey is completed at that household, 2) the respondent gives a hard refusal, 3) there are no eligible adults at the household, 4) there are language and/or comprehension difficulties with the respondent, 5) the randomly generated phone number is a non-working number, 6) the phone number is for a business, or 7) the number has been called at three different times without resolution.

A multiple call-back design is utilized to capture those respondents that are hardest to reach. If only one call was made before numbers were discarded, the sample would reflect those members of the population who are most likely to be at home at any given time. To the extent that this population differs on key survey variables from the population of people who are less likely to be at home, results would be biased.

These multiple call-backs are scheduled for different days of the week and different times of the day, to ensure the highest probability of reaching a respondent at a given phone number. In general, all interviews are conducted during evening hours on weekdays and Sundays, and during daytime hours on Saturdays.

Telephone numbers were selected into our sampling frame (i.e. became candidates for calling) using a list-assisted random digit dialing (RDD) procedure. Generally speaking, this procedure randomly selects known residential telephone numbers from directories, deletes the last two digits of the number and randomly adds two new digits. RDD methods are an improvement over list-based sample selection in the area of coverage--samples drawn entirely from listed phone directories exclude all potential respondents with unlisted phone numbers. To the extent that this population is different from the listed telephone population on key survey variables, results will be biased.

III. INTERPRETING THE RESULTS

The results presented in this report are projectable to the population of American adults living in telephone households (those with at least one residential phone line). To ease the terminology throughout the report, this target population is referred to as "Americans," "citizens" or the like. In all cases, when these results are projected to the population at large, they are estimating the characteristics of this group--American adults living in telephone households. As the telephone penetration rate is reasonably high in the United States (95%) and other developed countries, results from telephone surveys are often projected to the entire population (for a more detailed discussion, please see Appendix B-Sources of Non-Sampling Error).

As with any sample survey, the projection of results to a population carries with it an associated sampling error. This arises when a sample of the target population is used to estimate that population's characteristics. If elements (respondents) from the population are selected into the sample using a random method, statistical theory allows us to construct known sampling errors for these sample estimates. A table of sampling tolerances documenting the associated margins of error for percentage estimates is appended to this report. The error margins are calculated at the 95% confidence level, which means for a given percentage estimate, if 100 independent samples were drawn, 95 of them would give results that were within the margin of error of the true population percentage.

Not only do random selection and statistical theory allow for the construction of error margins around percentage estimates, they also allow one to compare differences in sample proportions and calculate the likelihood that any observed difference is likely to occur in the population at large (as opposed to being an artifact of sampling error). A formula for calculating significance is attached in Appendix A. Throughout the report, when the term "significant" is used to describe a difference between two or more figures, it refers to statistical significance at the 95% confidence level. That is, one can be 95% sure that the observed difference does exist in the target population.

For a more complete description of non-sampling errors that may influence survey results, please refer to Appendix B.

IV. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND KEY FINDINGS

From a list of four responsibilities of museums, libraries and historic houses, those receiving the highest importance ratings from Americans are: providing educational opportunities to the public and preserving collections already owned. From a list of four preservation functions, caring for and treating the institution's collections rated the highest.

There is a very high level of agreement with the statement, "The collections in our nation's museums, libraries and historic houses need to be preserved"--ninety-five percent either *strongly agree* or *agree*. This high level of agreement cuts across all demographic dimensions, such as age, income and gender.

Although Americans agree that these collections need to be preserved, much less agreement exists that museums, libraries and historic houses have the necessary resources to preserve their collections. In fact, thirty-eight percent either *disagree* or *strongly disagree* that these institutions have enough resources. This substantial gap between expected role and perceived adequacy of resources gives the cultural preservation community a key leverage point with which to pursue expanded funding and patronage.

This leverage point is especially evident among Americans who visit cultural institutions (43% in the last six months), who belong to cultural institutions (23%), and who have personal heirlooms (53%). These groups are least likely to believe that sufficient preservation resources exist.

The one function of cultural preservation institutions which is rated lowest in importance concerns providing information and services for the care of personal heirlooms. However, among those who have heirlooms and irreplaceable personal belongings, this function is still considered quite important. Given that seventy-one percent of people who have heirlooms take some steps to care for their treasured belongings, there is a need among a certain sector of the public for this particular service.

Seventy-two percent (72%) of Americans are aware of the television program *This Old House*. This awareness level is significantly higher than awareness of the *Old House Journal* (17%), the book *Caring for your Collections: Preserving and Protecting your Art and Other Collectibles*, (9%) and the Save Outdoor Sculpture program (7%). Awareness of *This Old House*, the *Old House Journal* and the SOS program is greatest among Americans who have recently visited, or are members of, a museum, library or historic house. Awareness of the book *Caring for your Collections* appears to be unaffected by these two behaviors.

Approximately sixteen percent of Americans have ever made a contribution that was known to go toward the preservation of collections. Of those citizens who have never made such a contribution (55% of the population in total), only four percent are *very likely* to do so in the next two years.