

Survey of Earned Doctorates

NSF, NIH, USED,
NEH, USDA, NASA

How the SED Keeps
Your Information
**STRICTLY
CONFIDENTIAL**

NORC
A national organization for research
at the University of Chicago

Our Privacy Policy

The information provided on the Survey of Earned Doctorates (SED) questionnaire remains confidential and is safeguarded in accordance with the Privacy Act of 1974, as amended. The survey data are reported only in aggregate form or in a manner that does not identify information about an individual.

As the current data collection contractor for the SED, the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago takes the strongest measures to safeguard respondent confidentiality. All project staff members sign binding confidentiality pledges and our processing facilities and computer systems are carefully designed and continuously tested to safeguard the information provided by institutions and respondents.

Security Safeguard Procedures

Only two groups can receive individual-identifiable data from the SED project:

- The SED Federal sponsors (for program evaluation)
- Graduate School Deans (for own graduates only)

Confidentiality safeguards prohibit the use of data for commercial purposes or for investigating an individual respondent or institution. Any independent researcher or contractor for the Federal agencies that performs analyses of the data must sign legally binding organizational and individual Data Use Agreements certifying that the data will only be used for research purposes and that the security of the data will be protected. Penalties for breaching these agreements range upward from \$250,000, and audits of licensed users are regularly conducted by the Federal government.

Similarly, Graduate Deans must sign an agreement that they will only use the data for statistical purposes, and will safeguard the confidentiality of the responses.

SED staff not only secures the survey materials and data, but also removes identifying information from any data and analyses provided to outside sources. It aggregates data to levels that will not allow the identification of individual respondents from the data.

Social Security Number

We understand that you may have concerns about providing your Social Security Number (SSN). We would like to reassure you that your SSN information is kept strictly confidential and is not used outside the project under any condition. The purpose of the Social Security Number is for survey quality control by the contractor (NORC) and for statistical purposes in program evaluation by the SED Federal sponsors.

We ask for your SSN for three specific purposes:

- 1) We use the number to make sure that we do not have duplicate records for any doctorate recipient in the historical data file. Each year we receive several questionnaires from individuals who had completed the SED in an earlier year, when they had expected to graduate. The SSN is the best way to locate such matching records across survey rounds, as well as to cross-reference individuals completing a second research doctorate.
- 2) The National Science Foundation conducts a follow-up survey of a sample of doctorate recipients, the Survey of Doctorate Recipients (SDR), and the SSN may be used to find the mailing addresses of sampled individuals two or more years after they completed their doctoral programs. This follow-up survey is completely voluntary.

- 3) The major Federal agencies that sponsor the SED use the SSN to match the SED data to information on Federal funding support for graduate education. Congress and the Federal agencies require that information on the effectiveness of Federal programs be used in the funding process for these programs. Federal programs conduct program evaluations by using the SED to determine, for example, the percent of participants in a program such as the NSF Graduate Fellowship Program who have completed the doctorate. The U.S. Department of Education has used the SED to evaluate several graduate student aid programs, and National Institutes of Health has used it to evaluate its graduate trainee programs.

Legally, your Social Security Number is solicited under the National Science Foundation Act of 1950, as amended; provision of it is voluntary.

More Information Available

Publications from the Survey of Earned Doctorates use aggregated data in which a person cannot be identified.

The SED Summary Reports are available at:

<http://www.norc.uchicago.edu/issues/docdata.htm>

If you have any questions or concerns about the survey, please contact:

Ms. Jamie Friedman
Doctorate Data Project
National Opinion Research Center
55 East Monroe Street, Suite 1840
Chicago, IL 60603

Phone:
1-800-248-8649

Fax:
1-800-684-0704

E-mail:
4800-sed@norc.uchicago.edu

The SED is conducted by
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for
The National Science Foundation
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The U.S. Department of Education
The National Endowment for the Humanities
The U.S. Department of Agriculture
The National Aeronautics and Space Administration