

**MODEL NUMBER 3**  
**OF A**  
**“PUBLIC AWARENESS ANALYZED EXAMPLE”**

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**WHERE:** This is found at

[http://www.bizjournals.com/albuquerque/stories/2008/09/08/daily14.html?ana=from\\_rss](http://www.bizjournals.com/albuquerque/stories/2008/09/08/daily14.html?ana=from_rss)

**WHAT:** It's an article describing the results of a recent poll of Americans' concerns about the present and future economic situation.

**ANALYSIS:** A survey was taken of Americans about the economy. The **observational units** were American adults. **Variables** were their responses to a variety of questions about whether or not they are “wary of present economic conditions”, “stressed about their current financial situation, high gas prices and the housing market”, whether they “invest less” but “plan to invest more in the future”. These are all **categorical** variables, some **binary** and some not.

Statistics were computed from these categorical variables measured for the sample, yielding results like “three out of four Americans are stressed about ...” , “68 percent agree that ...”, and “one-third of Americans are currently ....”

The sample, of size 1031, was taken online between July 11 and July 23 and was “nationally representative.”

**CRITICISM:** The results, as reported *could* be true. There is something fishy about this report, however. The exact questions are not given, and “agreeing” that the stock market is “resilient” seems very poorly defined and mushy. Phrasing the result in this way also seems to imply that the surveyors had a point of view and were looking for affirmation, and not simply trying to see what the opinions were out there, in the public.

Similarly suspicious is the random collection of results reported: were the results carefully sorted into ones which do or do not support or a particular (political?) position, and then only the supporters were described in this article?

Another problem is the inaccuracy of the numbers given – as “three out of four Americans” and “one third of Americans”, *etc.* – do they mean *exactly* 75% and 33.33%, or just nearly those number? (But then how near is their idea of “nearly”??

Finally, there is the question of that “nationally representative sample of 1031 respondents.” It is not explained how that sample was found, nor of whom it is thought to be representative (all Americans? likely voters? full-time employed Americans?). But certainly it seems that a sample of size 1031 can be truly representative of **all Americans**.