This article reports on efforts to develop a telephone survey that measures the overall prevalence of employment standards (ES) violations as well as their evasion and erosion in low-wage jobs in Ontario, without requiring that respondents have any pre-existing legal knowledge. The result is a survey instrument that is unique in the Canadian context and reflects the concerns of both academic researchers and workers’ rights activists. Pilot survey results show that Ontario workers do not necessarily distinguish between ES violations and other workplace grievances and complaints. With careful questionnaire design, it is nevertheless possible to measure the prevalence of ES violations, evasion and erosion. In order to track the effects of ES policies and their implementation, it will be crucial to establish baseline measures and standardized reporting tools.