

LECTURE 17 PART I: 13.1-13.3 Nonresponse in Sample Surveys

Definition. A nonresponse in a sample survey occurs when responses from some of the sampled units cannot be obtained.

Definition. A nonresponse rate is the number of sampled units not completing the survey divided by the total number of sampled units.

Definition. A response rate is the number of sampled units completing the survey divided by the total number of sampled units. It is also called a completion rate.

Reasons for Nonresponse:

- Person refuses to participate
- Person cannot be contacted
 - ✓ he/she is never at home or doesn't answer the phone
 - ✓ he/she moved out and mail surveys are returned
- Person is unable to participate
 - ✓ due to health reasons
 - ✓ due to lack of language proficiency (oral or written)

The nonresponse to public surveys has been steadily increasing over the years.

Possible reasons include:

- Increased refusals
 - ✓ time constraints ("too busy")
 - ✓ too many survey requests
 - ✓ too many commercial calls
 - ✓ too much junk mail
 - ✓ lessened sense of civic responsibility
 - ✓ more concerns about safety, fraud, and misrepresentation
- Declined contact rates
 - ✓ increased numbers of caller IDs, answering machines, cell phones, multiple telephone numbers, unlisted numbers, do-not-call-list numbers
 - ✓ increased numbers of gated communities, limited access apartment buildings
 - ✓ toughened privacy regulations

13. 2 Methods of Increasing Response Rate in Sample Surveys:

- Increase the number of households contacted successfully
 - ✓ try to contact nonrespondents at different time (visit the household or call in the evening on work days, or on weekend)
 - ✓ address mail surveys to “Mr. and Mrs. Jones or current resident”
- Increase the completion rates in mail questionnaires
 - ✓ use attractive packaging
 - ✓ include carefully worded cover letter (with statement of confidentiality)
 - ✓ use first-class envelope and include first-class return envelope
 - ✓ use shorter questionnaires rather than lengthy ones
- Increase the completion rate of any interview
 - ✓ solicit endorsement of a survey by an official agency or organization which might be interested in results of the survey
 - ✓ provide interviewers with proper credentials
 - ✓ offer a substantial monetary award for completion of the survey (it may include cash amount, coupons, gift cards, football tickets)