

Validity of Response Rates: Quality vs. Quantity:
An Annotated Bibliography
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Bennett, L., & Nair, C. (2010). A recipe for effective participation rates for web-based surveys. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 35(4), 357.

Abstract summary: One way many universities have approached the process of better understanding and meeting the needs of their students is through student evaluations. The evaluation data provide not only diagnostic feedback but also useful information in terms of the quality of learning and teaching experiences. In an effective quality cycle, the data gathered are analysed and used to make improvements. This is often referred to as 'closing the loop'. However, for any evaluation data to be of value an important prerequisite for 'closing the loop' is that *response rates* should be sufficiently high to be representative of the student cohort. This paper describes how a faculty within Monash University utilising only web based surveys developed a successful communication strategy to elicit staff and student participation in the unit (subject) evaluation process which achieved a *response rate* as high as 83.2%.

Cohen, P. A. (1981). Student ratings of instruction and student achievement: A meta-analysis of multisection validity studies. *Review of Educational Research*, 51(3), 281-309.

Abstract summary: Abstract currently unavailable.

Crumbley, D. L., & Reichelt, K. J. (2009). Teaching effectiveness, impression management, and dysfunctional behavior: Student evaluation of teaching control data. *Quality Assurance in Education*, 17(4), 377-392.

Abstract summary: Purpose - *Student evaluation of teaching (SET)* questionnaires are used in many countries, although much current research questions the validity of these surveys. US research indicates that more than 90 percent of academic accounting departments use this performance measurement. This paper aims to focus on the validity of SET data. Design/methodology/approach - A mail survey was sent to a random sample of 1,000 accounting professors employed at four-year universities and colleges in the USA. A total of 447 responses were returned for a response rate of 44.7 percent. Statistical results of the survey for data are reported. Findings - Instructors engage in impression management when SET data are used for control purposes. Dysfunctional behavior of accounting instructors includes easy grading, inflating grades, course work deflation, and other defensive strategies which result in negative social implications. A significant 53 percent of the accounting instructors knew of other professors who have reduced grading standards and course content in order to improve SET scores. Practical implications - Universities worldwide risk legal action when they defame faculty members by releasing unreliable and invalid SET results. Originality/value - The paper illustrates some of the present problems with SET questionnaires.

Greenlaw, C., & Brown-Welty, S. (2009). A comparison of web-based and paper-based survey methods: Testing assumptions of survey mode and response cost. *Evaluation Review*, 33(5), 464.

Abstract summary: Web-based surveys have become more prevalent in areas such as evaluation, research, and marketing research to name a few. The proliferation of these online surveys raises the question, how do response rates compare with traditional surveys and at what cost? This research explored response rates and costs for Web-based surveys, paper surveys, and mixed-mode surveys. The participants included evaluators from the American Evaluation Association (AEA). Results included that mixed-mode, while more expensive, had higher response rates.

Kulik, J. A. (2001). Student ratings: Validity, utility, and controversy. *New Directions for Institutional Research*, 27(5), 9-25.

Abstract summary: This chapter reviews the conclusions on which most experts agree, cites some of the main sources of support for these conclusions, and discusses some dissenting opinions and the research support for those opinions.

Lee, S., Brown, E., Grant, D., Belin, T., & Brick, J. (2009). Exploring nonresponse bias in a health survey using neighborhood characteristics. *American Journal of Public Health*, 99(10), 1811-7.

Abstract summary: We examined potential nonresponse bias in a large-scale, population-based, random-digit-dialed telephone survey in California and its association with the response rate. We used California Health Interview Survey (CHIS) data and US Census data and linked the two data sets at the census tract level. We compared a broad range of neighborhood characteristics of respondents and nonrespondents to CHIS. We projected individual-level nonresponse bias using the neighborhood characteristics. We found little to no substantial difference in neighborhood characteristics between respondents and nonrespondents. The response propensity of the CHIS sample was similarly distributed across these characteristics. The projected nonresponse bias appeared very small. The response rate in CHIS did not result in significant nonresponse bias and did not substantially affect the level of data representativeness, and it is not valid to focus on response rates alone in determining the quality of survey data.

Radwin, D. (2009, October 5). High response rates don't ensure survey accuracy. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from <http://proquest.umi.com>

Abstract summary: The use of surveys is one of the fastest-growing and most pervasive trends on campuses. With rising demands for systematic evidence and rapidly shrinking costs to gather such data, colleges and universities are increasingly surveying students, employees, and alumni to measure all kinds of things. Unfortunately, all too often administrators interpret a survey's response rate as a comprehensive indicator of its accuracy.

Timmerman, T. (2008). On the Validity of RateMyProfessors.com. *Journal of Education for Business*, 84(1), 55-61.

Abstract summary: The purpose of this study was to address some of the most common questions and concerns regarding RateMyProfessors.com (RMP). Data from 5 different universities and 1,167 faculty members showed that (a) the ratings are not dominated by griping, (b) the summary evaluation correlates highly with summary evaluations from an official university evaluation, (c) substantive relations are generally the same when only a single rating has been provided, (d) the relation between RMP Easiness and RMP Quality is partially explained by the fact that learning is associated with perceived easiness, and (e) the substantive findings generalize to business faculty in different universities. The author discusses the possible value of RMP without endorsing its unlimited use for administrative purposes.