

Student Affairs

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Assessment Newsletter



Survey Response Rates

According to Paperclip Communications (2013), as of 2013 the national response rate for surveys was a mere 20%. The low percentage may seem shocking at first, but consider, how many emails, phone calls, or websites do you encounter every week asking for your participation in a “short 5 minute survey?” We are certainly a population who is over-surveyed. Surveys have many pros associated with them, such as ease of use and ease in coding the data, however an immense con is the low response rate. With low response rates, it becomes difficult to generalize the data to a larger population and can be unusable if there aren't enough respondents. As researchers and assessment professionals, a common question then becomes, “how can we improve response rates?”

Why would response rates be low?

Response rates could be low for various reasons:

- There aren't multiple contacts being made
- The survey is too long
- There aren't appropriate incentives
- The survey isn't salient
- There is a blank subject line

A researcher should be including a pre-notice, an invitation, at least two reminders, and a thank you when promoting a survey. If there is only one contact made, a participant may be likely to ignore or forget about the upcoming survey. Incentives can also help increase survey response rates, however, only if the incentives are enticing and easy to use by everyone. Additionally, a survey is more appealing to respondents if the survey is relevant to their interests. If a survey isn't directly related to the respondents interests, telling respondents they are part of a selected sample or that they are one of the few asked for their opinions can increase salience.

Does Incentive Pay Matter?



It has been rumored that giving respondents a cash incentive can help boost response rates, and indeed In a study by Parsons and Manierre (2014), it was found that unconditional cash incentives dose boost web survey response rates.

Parsons, N. L., & Manierre, M. J. (2014). Investigating the Relationship among Prepaid Token Incentives, Response Rates, and Nonresponse Bias in a Web Survey. *Field Methods*, 26(2), 191-204.

Check us out in the web at <http://castle.eiu.edu/sa-assessment/>



A Survey for you, a Survey for you... and a Survey for you!



How Do I Share my Survey?

There are several ways to share your survey. However, some mediums will be more successful for certain populations. For a younger age group, electronic surveys may garner a larger response rate versus mail-in surveys, for example. A few of the most popular methods for promoting surveys are:

1. Sending out a survey web link
2. Embedding your survey on a website or blog
3. Emailing your survey to respondents
4. Adding your survey to Facebook
5. Sharing your survey link on Twitter

What Else Might Increase Response Rates?

1. Know your audience, when would be the best time for them to take a survey and through what medium?
2. Update contact information for respondents frequently, they can't take a survey if they never receive it.
3. A good joke often includes perfect timing. The same holds true for surveys. Administer them during a time more people are likely to view them, such as a mid-weekday morning.
4. Announce your intentions. Let respondents know you'll be sending out a survey and the approximate date to expect it by, as well as a brief description of your intentions for creating and administering the survey.