

HOWDY!

Improving Response Rates:

Student Life Studies Guide to
Better Survey Response Rates



TEXAS A&M
UNIVERSITY.

Survey Response Rate Overview

- Survey Length
- Follow up Reminders
- Research Affiliation
- Issue Salience
- Group Cohesiveness
- Pre-notification
- Compensation/Incentives
- Non-Response Bias



Survey Length

Question Number	Response Rate
Q1	68/0
Q41	57/11
Q44	56/12
Q57	52/16
Q63	51/17
Q68	49/19
Q73	46/22
Q83	50/18
Q89	51/17
Q95	49/19
Q100	50/18



Follow Up Reminders

	Overall	Students	Staff	Faculty/ Other
Overall Response Rate	23.9%	21.6	30.8	31.6
Invite Only	2.6%	3.8	N/A	N/A
1 reminder	8.1%	3.1	13.4	5.6
2 reminders	23.3%	21.2	24.3	.8
3 reminders	24.9%	12.4	8.1	30.8
4 reminders	24.8%	0	.4	N/A
5 reminders	24.8%	.2	N/A	N/A
6 reminders	24.4%	.3	N/A	N/A
7 reminders	24.1%	.5	N/A	N/A



Research Affiliation

- Participants are more likely to participate if they feel there is a research focus or purpose for the survey

Survey Issues

Research

Customer Satisfaction

Program Improvement

Opinion

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Issue Salience

- “Salience has been defined as the association of importance and or timeliness with a specific topic” (Sheehan, 2001, pp. 5).
- Know your audience:
 - What is important to them?
 - Why is the topic timely for them?
 - Why would they answer?
 - Why would they not answer?



Group Cohesiveness

Category	Response Rate
Panel Affiliation	30.2
Random Sample	15.7



Pre-Notification

- Generate Group Cohesiveness
- Generate Issue Salience
- Generate Research Affiliation
- Email ahead of time
- Mail ahead of time
- Word of mouth
- Flyers
- Social Media
- Advertisements



Compensation/Incentives

- No significant impact on response rate
- Cost benefit analysis
 - Cost of incentives
 - Cost of administering the program
 - Benefit in increased response rate
 - Potential response bias is introduced



Non-Response Bias

	POPULATION	Sept	Oct	Nov
N	7165	1541	1274	1259
Female	53.3	63.5	64.8	66.8
Male	46.7	36.5	35.2	33.2
Graduate	.3	.1	.2	.2
Freshman	69.9	73.7	71	73.2
Sophomore	18.8	16.3	17.1	17.2
Junior	6.9	6	7.5	5.6
Senior	4.2	3.8	4.1	3.9
African American	6	6.1	5.8	6.1
Hispanic	29.8	33.2	33.6	34.1
Native American	.0	.1	.2	.1
Mixed Race	2.1	2.1	2.2	2.3
Asian/Pacific Islander	7	6.9	6.7	5.7
Other	1	1.2	1.8	1.6
White	53.5	50.2	49.7	50.1



Summary

- Survey Length
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Final Thought

- “...individuals’ overall attitudes toward the survey industry may be unfavorable, and the aura of ‘*uniqueness*’ to the participation in the survey process diminishes” (Sheehan, 2001, pp. 3)



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