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Addressing Nonresponse in Surveys

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Introduction

Many countries use surveys to measure characteristics of their population such as socioeconomic status or health. While the use of surveys may have worked well in the past, more recently there has been a decline in survey response rates (Groves, Dillman, Eltinge, Little, 2002). A decrease in response rates can affect the ability of the survey statistics to accurately reflect the characteristics of the population which would indicate nonresponse bias. However, it should be noted that the lower response rates do not necessarily indicate nonresponse bias and higher response rates do not necessarily indicate no nonresponse bias. Regardless of the response rate, if the nonresponders are very different in the characteristics that the survey is measuring from the responders, there is bias (Groves, Fowler, Couper, Lepkowski, Singer, Tourangeau, 2004).

When conducting a survey, it is often impractical to survey the entire universe of potential respondents. When the universe is very large, it is preferable to randomly sample the population to get a smaller group that can be surveyed in more detail. This is the

mail, misplace their regular mail, or are just very busy also might not respond. Yet, if their reason for not responding

is systematically related to an important aspect of the

(NCSBN, 2008). The 10 activity statements were selected by subject matter experts to represent those activities most likely to be performed by newly licensed nurses and those

Table 1. Importance of Activity Performance: Nonresponders vs. Responders

Average Months

1.

atic differences in the responders versus nonresponders and the researcher could conclude that the statistics from

References

Survey researchers are often concerned about the nonre-

sponse bias (Groves, Fowler, Couper, Lepkowski, 2004). The use of a nonresponder study can assist researchers to address the issue of nonresponse. NCSBN began using the methodology in 2006 and has been refining and enhancing the methodology to include additional nonresponders and

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