


# Chapter 9

## The Impact of Survey Response Rates on Research Validity and Reliability

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### ABSTRACT

*The response rate, which represents the number of individuals who answered the survey, is one of the factors that impact the validity and reliability of a research study. This chapter aims to investigate the factors that impact the response rate and acceptable values. A scoping literature review is conducted to investigate recent studies in different fields ranging from management to social science and information technology, to determine the ranges of response rates and the effect of factors to gain a higher number of responses. In business and management, the average response rate was 51.18%, while in information technology, it was 41.22%. Performance assessment studies had an average response rate of 50.83%, and in the management information system field, the overall average was 32.26%. Finally, in computer science, the average response rate was 56.55%.*

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## INTRODUCTION

There are different data collection methods, and questionnaires and interviews are among the most frequent ones used to acquire information for research studies. The willingness of individuals to respond to the data collection tools is a vital factor that should be considered when conducting research and publishing the findings. This willingness can be described as a factor known as the response rate (Baruch & Holtom, 2008). There are different ways to define the response rate based on the denominator's choice. The response rate can be described as “the proportion of eligible individuals with whom the surveys are completed” (Holbrook, Krosnick, & Pfent, 2007). In other words, the response rate is calculated by dividing the number of people who completed the survey (questionnaire or interviews) by the total number of eligible people who were asked to participate in the survey. Alternatively, it can be calculated as the total number of participants who answered, divided by the total number of eligible individuals. The differences in data collection types make the description of the response rates also different (Morton, Bandara, Robinson, & Carr, 2012).

The response rate can be considered a function of both contacting the respondents and obtaining their cooperation using various strategies. Contact and cooperation rates are separate aspects of the interaction with participants, and surveys can be used to calculate them to assist researchers in increasing the response rate. For instance, researchers can increase the contact rate by targeting the contacts and increasing the number of call attempts. The contact rate is “the proportion of eligible individuals who were reached by the researcher.” On the other hand, the cooperation rate is “the proportion of all successfully contacted individuals who answered the questionnaire or agreed to participate in the interview.”

Indeed, the response rate can also be described based on the refusal rate, which is “the proportion of eligible individuals who refuse to participate in the study” (Holbrook et al., 2007). The main reasons for not responding can generally be categorized as follows:

- Issues that lead to the delivery failure of the questionnaires or difficulty in locating eligible participants;
- Reluctance of individuals to participate and answer the questions (Baruch, 1999; Morton et al., 2012).

The second issue is more challenging than the first one and can be addressed in many cases using different ways (Baruch & Holtom, 2008).

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