

Friday
FACTOID

How high does a survey response rate need to get reliable results?

INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCHERS:
Bridging the Gap Between Data and Decisions

One of the responsibilities of the Institutional Research office is to administer and analyze surveys as part of the College's institutional effectiveness process. One of the challenges is getting people to complete the surveys in order to have reliable results.

According to the [Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research](#), the creators of the [National Survey of Student Engagement \(NSSE\)](#), once a survey achieves a **25% response rate, the survey results are reliable**. Studies show a +0.98 correlation* between the results after the first 25% of the population responds and the final survey results, assuming a survey population of 250 or more. For small survey populations ($n < 250$), once there are 50 or more respondents the results are considered reliable.

*A correlation of +1.0 means the results would be exactly the same, -1.0 means the results would be opposite. A correlation of .98 is almost exactly the same.

Source: Fosnacht, Kevin, Sarraf, Shimon, Howe, Elijah, and Peck, Leah. Lecture, "How important are high response rates in survey research?" 2013 AIR Forum, Long Beach, CA, May 20, 2013.

Reprinted from Donny Femino, Director of Institutional Research, Endicott College

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