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## Differential Response Rates of Tertiary Respondents

In the National Survey of Families and Households the primary personal interview was conducted with a randomly selected adult in each sample household. If that respondent was married or cohabiting, a self-administered questionnaire was to be completed by his/her spouse or partner. In addition, if the primary respondent was the adult son or daughter or other relative of the householder, the householder was asked to complete a self-administered questionnaire.

The householder concept used in the NSFH is quite similar to that used by the United States Census Bureau. In households that included any adults other than the primary respondent and his/her spouse, the respondent was asked: "In whose name is this home owned or rented?" This person (or persons) was regarded as the householder and, where appropriate, was asked to complete the tertiary respondent questionnaire. In cases where more than one person was listed as the householder, the one whose first name came first alphabetically was regarded as householder. (In a few cases where the person listed as owning or renting the housing unit was not a household member, the primary respondent was designated as the householder.)

The purposes of the tertiary questionnaire were:

1. To obtain information on the relationship between the primary respondent and the person in whose household he/she was living from the householder as well as from the respondent.
2. To obtain information on the household, especially information concerning income and the economic condition of the members of the household.

In 917 cases the primary respondent was the son, daughter, or other relative of the householder. Of them, 710 completed the tertiary questionnaire, for a response rate 77.4 percent. Of the 917 respondents, 741 were sons or daughters of the householder and 176 were other relatives of the householder.

The other relatives were distributed by relationship (of primary respondent) to the householder (tertiary respondent) as follows:

Parent	47
Step-parent	3
Parent-in-law	8
Grandparent	1
Brother/sister	54
Half/step sibling	1
Brother/sister-in-law	12
Grandchild	20
Other relative	30
Total	176

Some characteristics of primary respondents who were sons or daughters or other relatives of the householder are:

#### Age Distribution

	Sons/daughters	Other relatives
19-20	30.4	10.8
21-24	34.3	18.8
25-29	17.0	9.1
30-39	11.9	13.6
40-59	6.3	14.2
60+	.1	33.5
Total	100.0	100.0

## Sex distribution

	Sons/daughters	Other relatives
Male	55.3	42.0
Female	44.7	58.0
Total	100.0	100.0

## Employment Status

	Sons/daughters	Other relatives
Not working	36.3	62.5
Working -		
< 35 hours	14.4	6.3
35-44 hours	29.8	22.7
45+ hours	18.2	8.0
Hours NA	1.2	0.6
Total	100.0	100.0

## Marital Status

	Sons/daughters	Other relatives
Married	6.6	13.1
Separated or divorced	12.1	19.3
Widowed	0.8	23.9
Never married	80.4	43.8
Total	100.0	100.0

## Race/ethnicity

	Sons/daughters	Other relatives
Black	29.0	30.1
Non-hispanic white	59.6	55.1
Mexican American	5.8	9.1
Puerto Rican	2.4	1.1
Other	3.1	4.5
Total	100.0	100.0

Ever Borne/Fathered a Child	Sons/daughters		Other relatives	
No	74.0		40.3	
Yes	26.0		59.7	
Total	100.0		100.0	

### Differential Rates of Response of Tertiary Respondents

Next we will present some information on differential response rates for the tertiary respondent questionnaire. We will follow procedures used in an earlier analysis of differential response to the secondary respondent questionnaire (Sweet, 1989).

Obviously, in the analysis of differential response rates of tertiary respondents, we can use only information that was obtained from the primary respondent. The only characteristics of the tertiary respondent that were provided in the primary interview are age, sex, and marital status.

The results are reported as deviations from the mean, using multiple classification analysis, a dummy variable regression procedure. The column labeled "gross deviation" is simply the category-specific mean expressed as a deviation from the overall sample mean. The column labeled "net deviation" adjusts for the confounding effects of other characteristics included in the model.

### Sex of Tertiary Respondent

Male tertiary respondents have a response rate that is about 8 points lower than female tertiary respondents. This is a similar differential to that for primary and secondary respondents.

### Age of Tertiary Respondent

The age pattern is not very orderly. It appears that higher than average tertiary response rates are found for persons who are between ages 30 and 49, and lower than average response rate for tertiary respondents who are age 45 to 69.

### Marital Status of Tertiary Respondent

The small number of tertiary respondents who were never married have a very low response rate. There is not much of a difference between the currently and the formerly married.

### Education of Primary Respondent

The tertiary response rates were lower when the primary respondent was a college graduate than when he/she was not; there was not much difference among the other education levels.

### Race/ethnicity

The tertiary response rate was much higher for majority white respondents than for minority respondents; the black-white difference was about 16 points and the difference between majority whites and Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans appears to be even larger, although the number of cases is small.

### Son or Daughter Versus Other Relatives

The tertiary response rate was about 5 points lower when the primary respondent was a son or daughter than when it was another type of relative, after controlling for other characteristics.

## Region of Residence

For reasons that are unknown, the tertiary response rate is very low in the West and highest in the South. (There were only small regional differences in response rates of secondary respondents. The response rate for the main interview was considerably higher in the South and Midwest than in the West and North East.)



Table 1

Differentials in Response Rates of Tertiary Respondents  
in the National Survey of Families and Households

	N	Deviation	
		Gross Mean = 77.4%	Net
<b>Age of Tertiary Respondent</b>			
<30	47	-7.1	-0.9
30-39	85	1.5	4.5
40-44	167	1.1	-0.4
45-49	173	4.8	4.6
50-54	129	-3.7	-3.8
55-59	98	-2.8	-3.7
60-69	127	-1.7	-1.5
70+	86	2.9	-0.2
<b>Education of Primary Respondent</b>			
<12	223	1.2	2.1
12	361	-0.8	-0.9
13-15	267	1.7	1.6
16+	61	-6.8	-9.4
<b>Race/ethnicity</b>			
Black	267	-7.3	-8.5
Non-hispanic white	535	6.6	6.9
Mexican American	59	-21.4	-19.2
Puerto Rican	20	-12.3	-12.7
Other	31	-3.1	-0.8
<b>Sex of Tertiary Respondent</b>			
Male	290	-5.9	-5.3
Female	622	2.8	2.5
<b>Relationship to Tertiary Respondent</b>			
Son or daughter	738	-0.3	-1.1
Other relative	174	1.4	4.8

Table 1 (continued)

	N	Deviation	
		Gross Mean = 77.4%	Net
<b>Marital Status of Tertiary Respondent</b>			
Married	488	0.6	0.5
Separated or divorced	202	2.4	2.2
Widowed	153	2.4	2.6
Never married	69	-16.4	-15.9
<b>Employment Status of Primary Respondent</b>			
Not working	376	0.6	0.8
Working			
<35 hours	118	5.8	3.9
35-44	261	-1.8	-1.4
45+	147	-3.2	-3.3
Hours NA	10	-	-
<b>Region of Residence</b>			
Northeast	204	-0.3	-0.8
North Central	238	-0.2	-2.2
South	331	3.8	5.4
West	144	-7.9	-7.6

## References

Sweet, James A. 1989. "Response Rates for Secondary Respondents." NSFH Working Paper No. 7, Center for Demography and Ecology, University of Wisconsin.

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