

Achieving High Response Rates During Follow-up Data Collection

Sometimes organizations survey youth after a program ends to learn about the program's longer-term outcomes. High response rates to such follow-up surveys are important because you can be confident that your results reflect the views of most participants, but high response rates can be difficult to achieve. The accompanying video discussed why high response rates are important and introduced a few key strategies to use to achieve them. The strategies are summarized in the list below. Key terms and their definitions are in Table 1.



Collect a variety of contact methods from youth while they are in the program.

Contact methods typically include email, social media handle, home address, and phone numbers for the youth and their parents or guardians. Collect this information at least twice, typically at the beginning and end of the program.



Maintain a relationship with program participants after the program ends.

For example, establish an Instagram handle they can follow so you maintain contact, or send them birthday or holiday postcards or text messages. You can use these modes of communication to remind youth about follow-up surveys that are coming up. Remember to maintain youth's privacy if communicating through social media. For example, you should not post publicly about surveys on an individual's page.



Consider the easiest way to distribute your follow-up survey. Online surveys sent via email or text are usually easier to distribute than paper surveys, particularly if the youth are no longer in the same school. Consider the survey's timing: avoid the school day or holidays when youth are likely busy.



Send tailored notifications and reminders. Reminders can include personalized text messages, emails, and phone calls. Try a combination of reminders that might be effective. If you are using an online survey, you should include a link to the survey in notifications and reminders.



Incentivize survey completion. There are many options for the type of incentive you can offer, such as gift cards or other small tokens of appreciation. Think about an appropriate incentive that fits within your budget and funding requirements, and use it to reward youth and encourage high response rates.

Table 1. Key terms

Term	Definition
Follow-up survey	A survey that collects data from youth participants weeks, months, or years after they take the baseline survey and participate in the program.
Response rate	The percentage of surveys completed and returned out of total surveys distributed.

For more on maintaining a relationship with program participants and sending notifications and reminders:

This tip sheet details communication strategies for increasing survey response rates: <https://ydekc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Increasing-Survey-Response-Rates-Tip-Sheet.pdf>

For more on selecting a survey mode:

This tip sheet details different survey modalities and their strengths and weaknesses: https://dism.duke.edu/files/2020/05/Tipsheet-Survey_Modality.pdf

This tip sheet details best practices to follow when designing and implementing web surveys: https://dism.duke.edu/files/2020/05/Tipsheet-WebSurveyTips_0.pdf

For more on incentives:

This tip sheet details several types of incentives and how to use them with youth participants: https://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/child_trends-2008_06_18_pi_ostincentives.pdf

For more on tracking responses:

This tip sheet details how to build a survey response tracking tool: <https://opa.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/2020-07/ta-tppevalbrief-11.pdf>

About this series

This video series, and the accompanying tip sheets on understanding and collecting high-quality data, were created as part of the [Sexual Risk Avoidance Education National Evaluation \(SRAENE\)](#). The series covers a range of data-related topics to help grantees understand the importance of high-quality data and provide guidance on how they can collect them in their program. Although some of the resources are drawn from topic areas that are not related to SRAE, the content on data is still relevant.

FYSB does not recommend any particular survey platform or data system that may be referenced in tip sheets.

For more information or questions, contact the SRAENE team at SRAETA@mathematica-mpr.com.

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