

IV Definitions and Documentation of the Final Disposition Codes

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At each wave, a person should be considered as a finalized case only if the interviewer has made at least three attempts to contact that person at different times of the day. All the individuals sampled at each wave, including during wave I, must appear as a record on the final data file for each wave along with final disposition codes at respective waves in order to be able to calculate response rates and determine nonresponse weight adjustments.

Consider using the following final disposition categories for final disposition codes, these are based on the standards proposed by the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR, 2004), and the Institute of Social and Economic Research at the University of Essex, United Kingdom (Lynn et al., 2001).

- Complete Interview (1)
 - An obtained completed survey questionnaire from the sampled individual with at least 90% of all in-scope questions answered. The in-scope questions are all the questions the respondent should answer given the questionnaire built-in skip patterns are followed.
- Partial Interview (2)
 - An obtained completed survey questionnaire from the sampled individual with 67% to 90% of all in-scope questions answered.
- Not eligible (3)
 - Residential household, but no eligible individual: The sampled individual does not belong to the survey population. For example, if the survey population is aged between 18-79 and the interviewer discovers that the sampled individual is 16 years-old, then this individual is not eligible for interview.
 - Non-residential household: The supplied address is either not fully constructed or has been demolished. The structure at the address can be vacant or it can be a non-residential building occupied by a business, school, communal service or similar.
- Eligible, Non-interview
 - Non-contact (4): This category may apply to the following situations: (i) the household is known to hold eligible respondents, however, at least three contact attempts were made at different times of the day, but no member of the household could be contacted; (ii) a contact was established with somebody at the address, but not with a sampled individual or another member of the selected household; (iii) in the consecutive waves this category also includes the households or sampled individuals where all attempts to trace were unsuccessful.
 - Refusal (5): The sampled individual refused to participate in the survey or refused to continue with the interview before the questionnaire contained enough information to qualify as partially completed.
 - Other nonresponse (6): The following situations may apply: (i) the household was contacted but the sampled individual was absent during the entire survey period; (ii) the interview could not be conducted due to language difficulties; (iii) the interview was not feasible due to some disability or prolonged illness.
- Unknown eligibility
 - Contacted (7): The eligibility of the sampled individual could not be established due to their refusal to share the necessary information with the interviewer. The refusal can occur either when the interviewer is trying to ascertain whether the address is residential or when the interviewer is inquiring about the eligibility of the selected individual.
 - Not contacted (8): These are more common cases of the unknown eligibility, where a contact was not possible because of range of different obstacles, such as security systems, dogs, locked gates, multi-dwelling units with difficult access, remote unreachable areas. The address supplied from the sampling frame could either be wrong, does not exist or insufficient information on the dwelling could be provided within the sampling frame.

If, and only if, the final disposition codes are included in the final data file for each sampled individual, it will be possible to calculate the response rate according to accepted international standard. Let us now show how the response rate can be calculated from the information on the final disposition. The final disposition codes can be denoted as follows:

I = Complete interview (1)

P = Partial interview (2)

NE = Not eligible (3)

NC = Non-contact (4)

R = Refusal (5)

O = Other non-response (6)

UC = Unknown eligibility, contacted (7)

UN = Unknown eligibility, non-contact (8)

e_c = Estimated proportion of contacted cases of unknown eligibility that are eligible

e_N = Estimated proportion of non-contacted cases of unknown eligibility that are eligible

Given the above notation the response rate can be calculated as:

$$RR = \frac{I + P}{(I + P) + (R + NC + O) + (e_c UC + e_N UN)}$$

Note that the e_c and e_N have to be estimated according to the best available objective information and not arbitrarily understated in order to artificially inflate the response rate. The estimation of the two ratios must be thoroughly documented in the technical report of the survey. The most frequently used assumption when estimating the ratios is that the proportion of eligible units within the resolved units is the same as the eligibility ratio within the units of unknown eligibility. In this case the calculation is as follows:

$$e_c = e_N = \frac{(I + P) + (R + NC + O)}{(I + P) + (R + NC + O) + NE}$$

In order to illustrate the calculation of the response rate, let us consider the following example. A sample of 1,000 units is selected and 880 are resolved (I, P, R, NC, O and NE) after one week of data collection. Of the resolved units, 790 are eligible for the survey (I, P, R, NC and O). Of the eligible units, 635 respond to the survey (I and P), 50 refuse to participate (R), and 105 are the non-contacts and other nonresponse (NC and O) totalling the nonrespondents (R, NC and O) to 155. That leaves 120 unresolved cases or cases with unknown eligibility (UC and UN). The proportion of the eligible units among the resolved ones is therefore $(635+155)/880=89.8\%$. Then, the response rate at the end of the first week of the survey is $635/(635+155+0.898*120)=70.7\%$.

For a more detailed discussion of the final disposition codes and the calculation of various rates, including the response rate, see “Standard Definitions: Final Dispositions of Case Codes and Outcome Rates for Surveys” (AAPOR, 2004) and “Recommended Standard Final Outcome Categories and Standard Definitions of Response Rate for Social Surveys” (Lynn et al., 2001).

Reference:

Lynn, Peter, Beerten, Roeland, Laiho, Johanna and Martin, Jean (October 2001) ‘Recommended Standard Final Outcome Categories and Standard Definitions of Response Rate for Social Surveys’, Working Papers of the Institute for Social and Economic Research, paper 2001-23. Colchester: University of Essex. [URL: <http://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/pubs/workpaps/pdf/2001-23.pdf>]

The American Association for Public Opinion Research. 2004. Standard Definitions: Final Dispositions of Case Codes and Outcome Rates for Surveys. 3rd edition. Lenexa, Kansas: AAPOR. [URL: <http://www.aapor.org/pdfs/standarddefs2004.pdf>]