

# Survey nonresponse in the 4th National Survey on Family in Japan

Masakazu YAMAUCHI

Survey nonresponse, which is composed of unit nonresponse and item nonresponse, occurs when a sampled unit does not respond to the whole survey or particular survey questions. In recent years, survey nonresponse has gradually generated interest in Japan, as many social surveys have declined their response rates.

In this paper, I assessed unit nonresponse and item nonresponse in the 4th National Survey on Family in Japan (NSFJ), which was conducted by National Institute of Population and Social Security Research in 2008. I examined (1) the kind of character of a sample unit that caused unit nonresponse; and (2) the type of questions and respondent attributes resulting in item nonresponse. The results were as follows. The main reasons of unit nonresponse were non-contacts and refusals. The samples living independently or in metropolitan areas were likely to fail to respond, and their non-contact rate was higher than their refusal rate. The unit nonresponse rate of the 4th NSFJ was higher than that of the 2nd NSFJ conducted in 1998. Both non-contact and refusal rates of the 4th NSFJ were higher than those of the 2nd NSFJ. The samples living with two or more family members whose unit nonresponse rate had been low were likely to influence the response rate.

The frequency of item nonresponse was associated with the topics and structures of the questions. At the same time, the socio-demographic features of respondents influenced the item nonresponse rate of different respondents. Older people, widowed or divorced, and the less educated were less likely to provide answers. The age of the youngest child and the job status also affected the item nonresponse rates of married respondents.

On the basis of these results, I suggested considering the data of the 4th NSFJ and proposed reconsidering the questions and their structures for the 5th NSFJ, which will be conducted in 2013.