

Trends in Nonresponse Rates in the National Survey on Migration

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In this paper, I examined trends in nonresponse rates, reasons for nonresponse, and association between household/regional characteristics and nonresponse rates for the National Survey on Migration conducted between 1996 and 2016.

Nonresponse is caused by invalid response, failure to distribute and to collect the questionnaires. The nonresponse rates increased by 8.5 points to 22.0% in 2001, and increased further by about 6 points to 27.9 % in 2006. The rates remain relatively stable thereafter, reaching 27.8% in 2016. The increase in nonresponse rate in 2001 is mainly due to the increase in rates of failure to distribute the questionnaires and of invalid response. In contrast, the increase in 2006 is mainly due to the increase in rates of failure to distribute the questionnaires. The biggest reason of failure to distribute the questionnaires in 2006 was refusals. The results imply the effect of the Act on the Protection of Personal Information introduced in 2005 as discussed in the past research on survey response rates.

With respect to the relationship between household/regional characteristics and nonresponse rates, it was found that the rates were higher in one-person households and in urban areas. Trends in reasons of nonresponse indicate that refusals were the major reason in 2006, but short-term absence increased in 2011 reaching the same level as refusals. In 2016, short-term absence has become the biggest reason. Refusals are lower in one-person households and higher in 2 or more person households. In 2006, refusals were higher in urban areas relative to non-urban areas, but in 2016, the differences by region has become negligible.

The effect of introducing "instructions for filling in the questionnaire" for non-Japanese residents appears to have contributed in reducing nonresponse due to "language problems" which decreased drastically in 2016. Introduction of internet in answering the questionnaire has created a new category of nonresponse which may be called "no internet response" by those who promised to answer the internet version but actually did not succeed in answering the questionnaire.