

Types of Missing Data

As in most surveys, there are three types of missing data in the SPD: household nonresponse, person nonresponse, and item nonresponse. Household nonresponse (also called whole unit nonresponse) occurs when an interviewer finds an eligible household's address but obtains no interview. This can happen as a result of people not being at home or being unwilling or unable to participate in the survey. Household nonresponse also occurs when a sample household has moved to an unknown or unavailable address. Household nonresponse is dealt with through weighting adjustments (see Chapter 5).

Person nonresponse (also called Type Z nonresponse) occurs when an interview is obtained from at least one household member but an interview is not obtained from one or more other sample people in that household. Like household nonresponse, this can happen as a result of a person being unwilling, unable, or unavailable to answer questions. Person nonresponse is dealt with through editing and imputation.

Item nonresponse occurs when a respondent completes part of the questionnaire but does not answer one or more individual questions. Item nonresponse can occur under any of the following circumstances: a respondent refuses or is unable to provide requested information; a response is inconsistent with related responses or is incompatible with the response categories; an interviewer fails to ask a question or to record an answer; an interviewer makes an error when recording or keying in the response. For item nonresponse, data are generally imputed for core items.