

Research Projects

[Home](#) | [Overview](#) | [Statistical Standards](#) | [Review and Adjudication](#)
[Confidentiality Procedures](#) | [Restricted Use Data Licenses Procedures](#)
[Task Force on Quality Systems](#) | [Research Projects](#)

Periodically, statistical questions arise that break new ground for NCES or in some cases the discipline. The Statistical Standards Program consults and advises in these situations, and in some instances convenes a panel of experts to consult on or review specific problems. Examples of this process include a review of the response probability decision rules that are applied in NCES assessments. In this case, analysis conducted by NCES Assessment Division staff identified an issue that was pursued in a collaborative analysis with staff at the Education Statistical Services Institute. The results of these analyses were the focus of several NCES seminars and at the request of the Advisory Council an expert review panel was convened to study these issues. Another example involves a detailed report on "Black-White Differences in Educational Achievement." That report drew upon data from a variety of data sets, some of which have response rates low enough to cause concern over the potential for bias in the resulting analysis. Review of this report resulted in a decision to further examine the response rates, potential bias and possible imputation procedures that might be used to adjust for item nonresponse. This review also contributed to the decision to pursue the revision of the standards related to response rates.

The Statistical Standards Group is currently sponsoring software development and testing in several areas concerning the analysis of complex sample survey data. The Program is also sponsoring and monitoring the development of a handbook of NCES data collections that will document key aspects of the design, collection, and processing of NCES surveys. A related report that summarizes the nonresponse rates and imputation procedures used in specific NCES data collections is also under development.

The Statistical Standards Program has recently initiated potentially long-term research in two areas. The ESSI will extend some earlier developmental work they conducted on total survey error for NCES; this project will be monitored by Program staff, but conducted independently by ESSI staff. The second project involves an increased level of participation on the part of Program staff. This project will examine methodological and analytic issues involved in using longitudinal data. This project will be conducted through collaborations with staff at WESTAT and faculty at the University of Michigan.

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