

# User experience surveys with maternity services: a randomized comparison of two ways of combining postal and electronic data collection

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## Background

Large-scale surveys of user reported experiences are a core component of quality evaluations in many western countries. However, low response rates are threatening the validity of such surveys, creating a need to identify initiatives to increase response rates and methods to assess the amount of non-response bias. The objectives of this study were to compare the effectiveness of two ways of combining postal and electronic data collection in a user experience survey with maternity services, and to assess the amount of non-response bias for both data collection procedures.

## Methods

As part of a national development and validation project related to user experience with maternity services, a randomized trial was conducted at a university hospital in Norway in 2010. Women giving birth in the period 1.june – 27.july were randomized to the following data collection models (n=734): Group A, postal distribution of questionnaires with electronic and paper response option in both postal requests; Group B, postal distribution of questionnaires with electronic response option in first request, electronic and paper in reminder. The primary outcome measure was response rate for each group, in addition we used three methods to assess the amount of non-response bias.

## Results

The response rate was significantly higher in Group A (51.9%) than Group B (41.1%). Of six background variables none were significantly different between respondents and non-respondents in Group A, while two of six variables were significantly different between respondents and non-respondents in Group B (mean number of diagnosis and admission type). Of a random sample of eight user experience questions none were significantly different between Group A and Group B. The six background variables were not at all or only weakly related to the eight user experience questions.

## Conclusion

Providing postal and electronic response options in both survey requests produced the highest response rate. However, both data collection models had little amount of non-response bias, indicating adequate generalizability of both approaches.

