

# Seven proven methods to boost your SOPS® response rates

Just because you've conducted the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality's Surveys on Patient Safety Culture™ (AHRQ SOPS®) for years doesn't mean you've maximized responses. A 60% response rate is required for The Joint Commission and other accrediting organizations — and for you to gain insights that matter.

## 1 Three ways to maximize survey responses from specific teams.

For SOPS, you can survey your entire staff or subsets. If you choose to target specific hospital units or personnel categories (e.g., nurses), you have three sampling options:

- Survey a subset of staff across your entire facility.
- Survey all staff in specific areas.
- Survey select staff from designated units.

## 2 The benefits of a hybrid approach (and why it's not as hard as you think).

Rather than limit your survey design to just one of the options above, you can deploy a mixed approach (e.g., all nurses plus a subset of staff from each unit). A hybrid survey allows you to oversample and emphasize key staff areas while representing the diversity of your workforce.

## 3 The minimum sample sizes needed — for valid results, every time.

Smaller hospitals (500 or fewer employees) should survey all staff. Larger hospitals require the following minimum sample sizes:

# STAFF	# SURVEYED
501 – 999	500
1,000 – 2,999	600
at least 3,000	800

## 4 The budget items you might be forgetting and how this can sabotage your response rate.

Don't expect to achieve a 60% response rate with a one-and-done approach. Budget for survey activities that promote participation after the first round of outreach. These items include the costs associated with follow-up and incentives to encourage staff response.

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### How to prevent low response rate surprises.

Waiting until the end of your survey to determine the response rate is the wrong kind of cliffhanger. Calculate response rates at least weekly so you have time to pivot if needed. Survey a subset of staff across your entire facility.

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### The three types of survey answers that steal from projected response rates.

The good news: you achieved a 60% response rate on SOPS. The bad news: you got bad data for your efforts. AHRQ recommends excluding surveys that include no actual responses, demographic data only or the same answer for all questions. Oversampling protects against answers without insights.

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### How to address incomplete surveys while preserving the response rate.

Don't expect staff to complete every question. Thankfully, a partially complete survey doesn't equate to an invalid one. By calculating a percentage for each type of question response (e.g., from strongly agree to strongly disagree), you can determine whether the overall response was positive, negative or neutral.

For more tips on higher SOPS response rates and how DataGen can help, [contact us today.](#)



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