

## Summaries

### **Bias in the level of education: The Dutch case**

by Gerard Visscher

In comparative perspective the Dutch population plays a remarkable role in random tests for more than 15 years already because of an extreme high nonresponse. Since the nineteenseventies a growing percentage of the population is not prepared to cooperate in government ordered surveys. Nonresponse percentages of 25 till 50 per cent of the survey are quite normal. In fact people who are not interested in the matter of research more and more refuse to participate. This also gives a bias in the level of education. For every 5 per cent of refusers the percentage of middle or higher educated people is raised by one per cent. In all sorts of statistics based on surveys a serious bias for the level of education appears. Despite all the efforts to correct the survey results *Statistics Netherlands* gives a too optimistic picture of the present social circumstances. The serious underestimation of the number of low educated people and the overestimation of the higher educated people for instance result in an overrating of the number of working people with almost 200,000.

### **The effects of nonresponse and retrospective bias on distributions and relationships in a study of absenteeism**

by H. van Goor and A.L. Verhage

Using administrative data as validating standard, we studied the combined effects of two sources of survey error – nonresponse and retrospective bias – on distributional and substantive bias in a mail survey of absenteeism among the employees of a Dutch road building company (response rate 77%). No distributional bias has been found in five sociodemographic variables (e.g., sex, age, and job category), but both nonresponse bias and retrospective bias can be observed in our central dependent variables: frequency and duration of absenteeism. Nonrespondents are on sick leave more frequently and longer than respondents. Furthermore, the self-reports of absenteeism of our respondents prove to be rather inaccurate. Underreporting of frequency and duration of sick leave is more common than overreporting. Therefore, both sources of error have a cumulative effect.

While nonresponse does not result in biased relationships, retrospective bias has clearly biasing consequences: seven out of 30 correlation coefficients analyzed are too biased to produce valid outcomes; another six are substantially biased. Multiple regression used for predicting recent absenteeism among respondents also leads to different outcomes, depending on the choice of data source (administration or questionnaire) for our absenteeism variables.

**Youth subculture and the reproduction of disadvantage**

by Jan Terpstra

The most important theories about (lower class) youth subcultures were developed in the fifties and sixties. The conditions lower class youth lives in today is different from that period of time. The question dealt with in this article is what is the value of these theories for understanding the more or less collective life styles of lower class youth in the nineties. Both strain and cultural pluralism theories are criticised for their deterministic view. Subculture, to a large extent produced by youth themselves, is itself a factor in reproducing a disadvantaged social position. Decreasing perspectives on a job and the institutionalisation of informal and partly illegal economic activities increases the chance that subculture of lower class youth is not a specific youth phenomenon anymore.