



Survey and Design

of Questionnaires

L3



Survey and Design of Questionnaires

When an appropriate sample has been selected, the next stage is to approach them and actually collect data.

- ▶ Types of survey - Methods of collecting data:
 - ▶ Observation
 - ▶ Personal interview
 - ▶ Telephone interview
 - ▶ Postal survey
 - ▶ Panel survey
 - ▶ Longitudinal survey

L3

2

Observation

If the population to be sampled consists of machines, animals, files or other **inanimate objects** the only feasible way of collecting data is direct observation. Even people often give the answer they feel they should to give or want rather than the true answer.

The reliability of observation **depends** largely on the observer and the circumstances, so it is best for counting, but less good for data which require some judgment.

L3

3

Personal interview

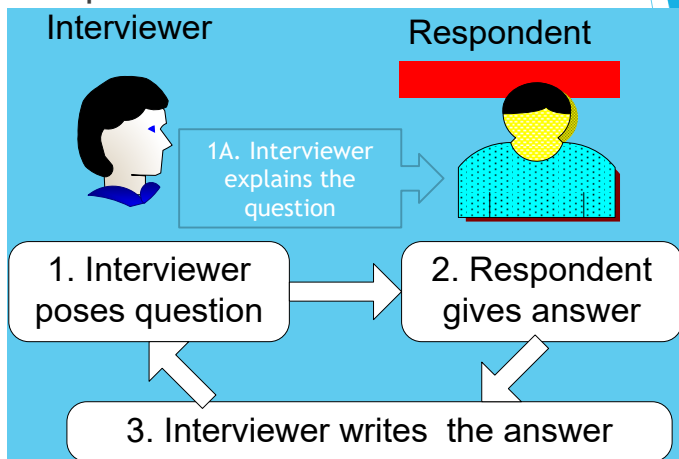
Personal interviews are the **most reliable** way of getting accurate information from people. They have the benefit of ensuring a **high response rate**, with only 10% of people generally refusing to answer questions. They also allow interviewers to **help with questions** which are unclear. In some situations such as quota sampling, some assessment of people is needed before they are questioned, so personal interviews are the only feasible method.

L3

4

Personal interview

Interview process:



Personal interview

In principle, collecting data by personal interviewers is easy; it needs someone to pose questions and listen to the answer. Reality is more complicated, and interviewers **need training** to ensure that they get reliable replies.

- ▶ Explaining the question but not direct answer.
- ▶ Giving information but not influencing on the respondent.

L3

6

Personal interview

One of the main drawbacks of personal interviews is the **cost**.

- ▶ Transportation costs
- ▶ Meal costs
- ▶ Accommodation costs
- ▶ Printing costs

40% of interviewer's **time** is spent in travel.

Only 35% is available for **asking questions**.

L3

7

Telephone interview

Most popular way of organizing surveys. It has the **advantages** of being cheap and easy to organize, it involves no travel for interviewers and gets a high response rate. Conversely, it has **disadvantages** of not personal observation of respondents, and annoying people who object to the intrusion of their homes.

L3

8

Telephone interview

A common procedure for telephone interviews is for a computer to select a telephone number at **random** from a directory listing. Then an interviewer asks the questions presented on a computer screen and **record answers directly** into the computer. This prevents any **errors** from being introduced during the transfer of answer from paper forms to the analyzing computer.

L3

9

Postal survey

Sending a printed questionnaire through the post has the advantage of being **very cheap** and **easy to organize**, so that very large samples can be used. Postal surveys work best when a series of short questions asks for factual (preferably numerical) data.

Major drawbacks are the **lack of opportunities** to observe respondents and clarify points which respondents do not understand.

L3

10

Postal survey

Generally, a survey can be expected to generate replies from about 20% of questionnaires. This response can be increased:

- ▶ by ensuring the questionnaire is short and easy to complete and is sent to the correct, named individual,
- ▶ by enclosing a pre-paid return envelope,
- ▶ by promoting anonymity of replies,
- ▶ by using a follow-up letter or telephone call if replies are slow,
- ▶ by promising a summary of results, or
- ▶ by offering some reward for completion.

L3

11

Postal survey

- ▶ E-mail survey - advantages and disadvantages?
- ▶ Web survey?

L3

12

Panel survey

Panel surveys are generally concerned with monitoring **changes over time**. A **panel of respondents** are selected, and they are asked a **series of questions** on different occasions. Thus the **political views** of a panel can be monitored during the lifetime of a government, or awareness of a product can be monitored during an advertising campaign.

Panel survey is **expensive** and difficult to **administer**, so they must rely on small samples.

L3

13

Panel survey

One interesting **problem** with panel surveys is that respondents often become so involved in the issues raised that they change their views and behavior. *A panel which is looking at the effects of an anti-smoking advertising campaign might be encouraged to look more deeply into the question of smoking and change their own habits.*

L3

14

Panel survey

Another **problem** is that panel members inevitably leave for some reason and the remainder of the panel become less representative of the population.

L3

15

Longitudinal survey

This is an extension of panel survey that involves the monitoring of a group of respondents over a long period.

One television company has, for example, been monitoring the progress of a group of children for the past 35 years.

L3

16

Longitudinal survey

Obvious **problem** with this approach is that considerable **resources** are needed to sustain an extended survey, and even then a small initial sample must be used. This small samples become vulnerable when some member leave during the long investigation. Longitudinal surveys are generally limited to studies of **sociological, health and physical changes**.

L3

17

Design of questionnaires

It is important, that the questionnaires are **designed carefully** and after a great **deal of thought**. There are many examples of surveys which have failed because they asked the wrong questions, or asked the right questions in the wrong way.

L3

18

Design of questionnaires

Key rules for good questionnaires:

- ▶ A questionnaire should ask a series of related questions. These should be short, simple questions phrased in everyday terms, and should follow a logical sequence.
- ▶ Make questions simple and easy to understand; if people do not understand the question they will give any convenient answer rather than the true one.

L3

19

Design of questionnaires

- ▶ Make questions brief, unambiguous, and without too many conditional clauses.
- ▶ Be very careful with the phrasing questions. Even simple changes can give different results. (60% success rate or 40% failure rate; four out of five people or 80% of people)

L3

20

Design of questionnaires

- ▶ Avoid leading questions such as ‘Do you agree with the common view that BBC television programs are of a higher quality than IBA television programs?’
- ▶ Use phrases which are as neutral as possible. ‘Do you like this cake’ or ‘How do you feel about the taste of this cake’ on a scale of 1 to 5’

L3

21

Design of questionnaires

- ▶ Remember that respondents are not always objective, so the question ‘Do you think prison sentences should be used to deter speeding drivers?’ will get a different response from ‘If you were caught speeding do you think you should go to prison?’
- ▶ Phrase all personal questions carefully. ‘Have you retired from paid work?’ or ‘How old are you?’

L3

22

Design of questionnaires

- ▶ Do not start questions with warning clauses. A question which starts ‘We hope you do not mind answering this question, but will understand if you do not want to ...’ will discourage everyone from answering.
- ▶ Avoid vague questions such as ‘Do you usually buy more meat than vegetables?’ This raises questions about ‘What is usual?, ‘What is more?’

L3

23

Design of questionnaires

- ▶ Ask positive questions such as ‘Did you buy a Sunday newspaper last week?’ rather than the less definite ‘How has the number of Sunday newspapers you read in the past few years?’
- ▶ Avoid hypothetical questions such as ‘How much would you spend on life insurance if you won 200 000 on the Big Brother show?’ This does not give useful data, because the answer is speculative and has probably not been thought out in any detail.

L3

24

Design of questionnaires

- ▶ Avoid asking **two or more** questions in one, such as ‘Do you think this development should go ahead because it will increase employment in the area and improve facilities?’ This will get confused answers from people who think the development should not go ahead, or those who think it will increase employment but not improve facilities, and so on.
- ▶ Make the questionnaire as **short** as possible, consistent with its purpose. A poorly presented questionnaire, or a long one, will frequently not be answered.

L3

25

Design of questionnaires

- ▶ Do not ask **irrelevant** questions. There are a lot of data which could be collected and might be useful.
- ▶ Open questions allow general comments, but they favour the articulate and quick-thinking.
- ▶ Ask questions which allow precoded answers

L3

26

Design of questionnaires

- ▶ Address postal survey to a **names person**
- ▶ Be prepared for **unexpected effects**
- ▶ Always run a **pilot survey** before starting the whole survey.

L3

27

Structure of questionnaires

- ▶ Start or finish with **population characteristics.**
- ▶ If the questionnaire is too big, divide the questions in several sections.

L3

28

TUNING EUROPE: Generic Competences

(for Graduates, Employers, Academics and Students)

This questionnaire presents a series of questions related to the generic skills and competences that may be important for success in a career. Please answer all the questions. The answers may be very valuable in improving course planning for future students. Please select the best option in each case.

For each of the skills listed below, please estimate:

- the **importance** of the skill or competence, in your opinion, for work in your profession;
- the **level** to which each skill or competence is developed by degree programmes at your university.

The blank spaces may be used to indicate any other skills that you consider important but which do not appear on the list.

Please use the following scale:
1 = none; 2 = weak; 3 = considerable; 4 = strong.

GENERIC COMPETENCE	Importance	Level to which developed by University Degree
1. Ability for abstract thinking, analysis and synthesis	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
2. Ability to apply knowledge in practical situations	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
3. Ability to plan and manage time	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
4. Knowledge and understanding of the subject area and understanding of the profession	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
5. Ability to communicate both orally and through the written word in native language	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
6. Ability to communicate in a second language	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
7. Skills in the use of information and communications technologies	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
8. Ability to undertake research at an appropriate level	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
9. Capacity to learn and stay up-to-date with learning	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>