

Designing Effective Surveys

Three Principles of Proper Surveying:

- A. Ethics in Surveys
 - Introduction must inform participants of the intentions of the survey
 - Respondents must be willing participants
 - Names of participants must be kept confidential
 - Personal information must be kept private
- B. Design for Honest Responses
 - If answers are kept anonymous and confidential, participants are more likely to be honest with their responses
 - In multiple choice questions, include options such as 'don't know', 'not applicable', or 'other' so that respondents have an option that is not part of the given list
 - Make the survey easy to complete and don't include too many questions that require a lot of concentration or thought (you want people to actually complete your survey!)
- C. Eliminate Bias
 - Avoid questions that lead the respondent to a particular answer or contain words that bring to mind negative images
 - Pose questions or scenarios that are neutral to avoid bias that favours certain cultures or ways of life
 - Consider the mode of delivery (personal interview, internet, telephone, mail) that is most appropriate for the types of questions being asked

NOTE: We will talk more about *bias* in another lesson but in case you are not familiar with that term, bias is an unwanted influence on the results of a study/survey. It can be caused by an unrepresentative sample from the population, the wording of survey questions, and/or the interpretation and presentation of survey results. It makes the results/conclusions much less reliable.

Tips for designing an effective survey:

1. State the purpose of the survey at the beginning.
2. Provide clear instructions.
3. Keep the questions short and clear. Do not use short-forms and abbreviations that people may not be familiar with.
4. Ask questions that are easily answered.
5. Ensure your questions are not biased. A question that leads the respondent to a particular answer and/or sways their opinion is biased.
6. For questions that include a list of possible answers (a checklist question), keep the number of options to a minimum.
7. Avoid asking for personal information unless it is important to the study.
8. Test the survey by having a few people complete it before it is sent out to everyone.
9. Include a variety of question types.

Types of Survey Questions:

Dichotomous: Questions that have two possible answers (yes/no, true/false etc.)

Multiple Choice: Questions that require you to choose from a list of predefined answers

Rating Scale: Questions that require you to rate something on a scale

Completion: Questions that require you to fill in the blank or answer with a single response

Open-Ended: Questions which allow the respondent can answer in their own words

Modes of Delivery:

Surveys can be conducted in person, on the internet, by phone, or by mail. List one advantage and one disadvantage of each.

Mode	Advantage	Disadvantage
Personal Interview		
Internet		
Phone		
Mail		