

Special considerations with on-line surveys

Sample & response rate

Response is voluntary so response rate will usually be lower.

This usually affects some sub-groups more than others, so can introduce bias.

Personalised follow-up reminders are only possible:

- if you have a full list of potential respondents
AND
- if you ask for names (which affects confidentiality)

Questionnaire design

Questionnaire must be short.

Questions must be very clear as there will be no fieldworker to explain.

Questionnaire may need translation, with separate links for each language.

“Skip” questions are usually not possible, so many questions may need a “not applicable” option.

Avoid open-ended questions – you will usually not be able to go back and ask for explanation of meaning.

Analysis

How will you deal with half-completed questionnaires?

Is there a way that you can check for (and delete) duplicate responses?

What will varying response rates from different sub-groups mean?

- How does this affect how you describe the sample?
- How does this affect how you report (Percentages inappropriate for small sub-samples)

Tips for questionnaire design

AVOID

- Leading questions – where you suggest which answer is correct/wanted
- Jargon
- Hypothetical questions – ask “would did you do” rather than “what would you do”
- Questions that assume knowledge that the respondent may not have
- Questions that ask whether respondent “knows about X”
- General factual questions for which you can get the correct answer in another way

Definitions

Are you clear about the terms you use?

Will your respondents and people who want to use your research have the same definitions?

What are the definitions for:

- Youth?
- Employment?
- Unemployment?
- Rural?
- Family?

For Likert-style

- Have an odd number of options so that there is a “neutral” in the middle
- Avoid more than 5 options. More than 5 is too many for respondent to think about and too many to analyse clearly
- Avoid too many Likert-style questions – danger of respondent giving same answer to all
- Avoid “negative” statements for agree/disagree as the double negative is confusing
- Try to keep Likert-type questions together