Survey Research
Surveys

Surveys are a good technique to collect quantitative data for statistical analysis.

Surveys typically use closed-ended questions to quantify responses.

Surveys rely on self-reported responses.

Surveys are good at measuring attitudes, beliefs, opinions and expectations; they are adequate at measuring behavior, characteristics and knowledge.

Surveys are the most common data collection technique in sociology.
Appropriate Research Questions for Surveys

Surveys are appropriate for research questions that:

- Link Variables
- Require explanations based on covariation
- Assess perceptions & attitudes
Types of Surveys

- Mail Questionnaire
- Telephone Interview
- Face-to-Face Interview
- Internet Questionnaire
## Types of Surveys & Their Features

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FEATURES</th>
<th>TYPE OF SURVEY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mail Questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Administrative Issues</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>Cheapest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speed</td>
<td>Slowest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length (No. of Questions)</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response Rate</td>
<td>Lowest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research Control</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probes Possible</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific Respondent</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Sequence</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only One Respondent</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Observation</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Success with Different Questions</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Aids</td>
<td>Limited</td>
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<tr>
<td>Open-Ended Questions</td>
<td>Limited</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contingency Questions</td>
<td>Limited</td>
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<tr>
<td>Complex Questions</td>
<td>Limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitive Questions</td>
<td>Some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Source of Bias</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Desirability</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewer Bias</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent’s Reading Skill</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From W.L. Neumann (2003), Table 10.4
Steps in the Process of Survey Research

Step 1:
+ Develop hypotheses
+ Decide on type of survey (mail, interview, telephone)
+ Write survey questions
+ Decide on response categories
+ Design layout

Step 2:
+ Plan how to record data
+ Pilot test survey instrument

Step 3:
+ Decide on target population
+ Get sampling frame
+ Decide on sample size
+ Select sample

Step 4:
+ Locate respondents
+ Conduct interviews
+ Carefully record data

Step 5:
+ Enter data into computers
+ Recheck all data
+ Perform statistical analyses on data

Step 6:
+ Describe methods and findings in research report
+ Present findings to others for critique and evaluation

From: W.L Neuman (2003), Figure 10.1
Developing Survey Questions

Good survey questions:

(1) Are clear, concise, simple
(2) Avoid ambiguity and confusion
(3) Are neutral
(4) Ask only one thing at a time
(5) Are NOT threatening or knowledge-based
(6) Include response categories that are mutually exclusive and exhaustive
Likert Scales

Likert scales use response categories that provide an equal number of positive and negative responses, e.g.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>Never</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Contingency Questions

Contingency (or filter) questions help respondents negotiate a questionnaire.

A contingency question categorizes the respondent, then directs him/her to another part of the questionnaire.
Pilot Testing Survey Questions

Good survey questions have been tested prior to use
Apply your questionnaire to at least 10 respondents under similar conditions to the survey
The purpose of a pilot test is to discover problems in the questions:
   (1) Ambiguities
   (2) Misunderstandings
   (3) Multiple interpretations