

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

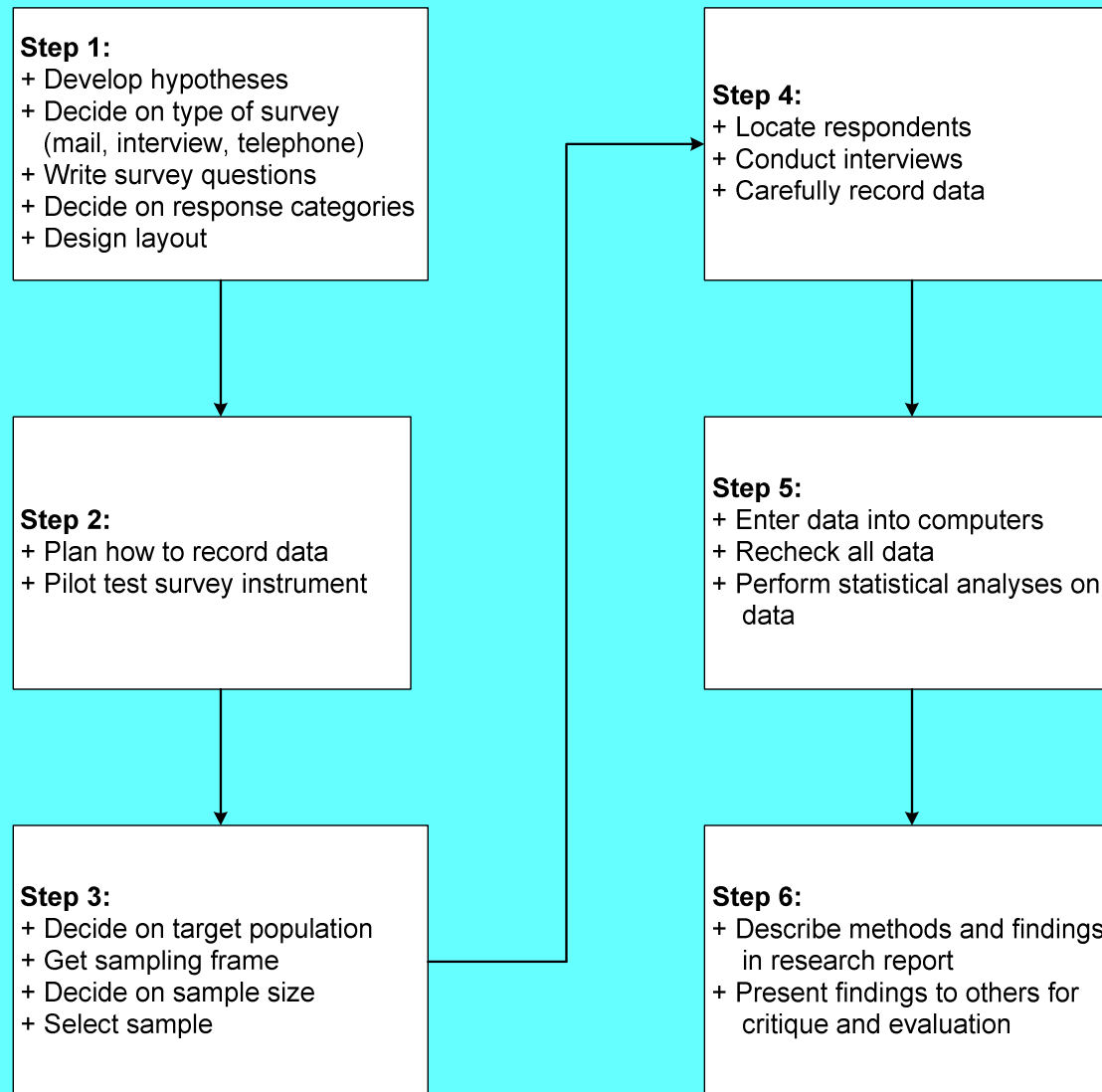
- Mail Questionnaire
- Telephone Interview
- Face-to-Face Interview
- Internet Questionnaire

Types of Surveys & Their Features

FEATURES	TYPE OF SURVEY		
	<i>Mail Questionnaire</i>	<i>Telephone Interview</i>	<i>Face-to-Face Interview</i>
<i>Administrative Issues</i>			
Cost	Cheapest	Moderate	Expensive
Speed	Slowest	Fastest	Slow to Moderate
Length (No. of Questions)	Moderate	Short	Longest
Response Rate	Lowest	Moderate	Highest
<i>Research Control</i>			
Probes Possible	No	Yes	Yes
Specific Respondent	No	Yes	Yes
Question Sequence	No	Yes	Yes
Only One Respondent	No	Yes	Yes
Visual Observation	No	No	Yes
<i>Success with Different Questions</i>			
Visual Aids	Limited	None	Yes
Open-Ended Questions	Limited	Limited	Yes
Contingency Questions	Limited	Yes	Yes
Complex Questions	Limited	Limited	Yes
Sensitive Questions	Some	Some	Some
<i>Source of Bias</i>			
Social Desirability	No	Some	Worse
Interviewer Bias	No	Some	Worse
Respondent's Reading Skill	Yes	No	No

SSC 470/570: *Methods of Social Research* From W.L. Neumann (2003), Table 10.4

Steps in the Process of Survey Research



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.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Excellent	Good	Average	Fair	Poor
Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never

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