



In-Depth Interviews

What is ... an In-Depth Interview?

A face-to-face structured and purposeful interview, normally conducted one-to-one. They can be very structured with a pre-set list of questions or more loosely structured around a set of themes.

Why use this technique?

It allows for the exploration of people's views, motives, desires, aspirations, ambitions, values and behaviours. They are useful for acquiring large quantities of open-ended information. Often used to clarify and identify issues prior to larger surveys.

When should you use it?

This technique should be used when:

- looking for qualitative feedback on proposals
- generating new ideas
- identifying issues for larger consultation practices
- tracking perceptions of issues
- following up issues from another exercise
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What type of information does it produce?

Predominately qualitative although, if the numbers are large enough, some quantitative data could be generated.

What are the advantages?

- useful for exploring sensitive and difficult issues, if handled carefully
- Minority opinions can be exposed
- The respondents decision making logic can be followed/analysed
- helpful in obtaining wide-ranging views
- if well structured, they will allow some comparison across different groups
- can generate detailed information

What are the disadvantages?

- Time consuming
- Expensive as many interviews required
- Non-dynamic/no spin-off with others in group situation
- Small sample numbers may undermine or question validity of the information
- They do not produce statistical data
- It requires trained interviewers

What are the costs?

- Possible training for interviewers or engaging trained people
- Need time and expertise in their compilation to ensure validity of results
- Can be costly to administer in terms of people's time
- May require an external researcher / research company with the correct expertise and resources.

What are the practicalities?

- Clearly identify your target population
- You must be clear about the purpose of the exercise and know who should make up the target group
- Determine to involved members of hard to reach groups
- Use trained interviewers if conducting unstructured interviews
- You need to assure respondents of confidentiality
- You must need any staff are given training and appropriate guidance (if required).
- It will be relatively easy to manage if you put a proper framework in place.