



Telephone Surveys

What are ... telephone surveys?

Telephone surveys are similar to face to face surveys with one obvious difference! Questions are asked over the phone with the caller recording the details given by the consultee.

Why use this technique?

They provide a means of gathering a snapshot of the views of a large number of people. The results can be summarised in the form of statistics allowing the measurement of such things as:

- Current performance
- Possible future performance/expectations
- Attitudes
- Opinions

When should you use it?

Useful for gathering a quick response and may be easier to manage than face-to-face interviews.

What type of information does it produce?

A mixture of quantitative and qualitative data depending on the type of questions asked. Tends to be more quantitative, which is better for finding out how things are rather than opinions.

What are the advantages?

- It is cheaper than face-to-face interviews
- higher response rates than face-to-face interviews
- It has short time-frame
- It is easy to manage
- It is easy to check that respondent is part of target population
- It is easy to cover geographically diverse groups
- It can produce a rapid response/fairly cheap
- A wide geographical area covered
- Large numbers of people can be contacted at a relatively low cost
- It is relatively easy to conduct in-house
- It can ask sensitive questions
- It can be easily managed and can be office-based
- It is an easy way to survey people who live in a wide geographic area
- It is easier for people who are restricted to the home to participate e.g. disabled people, people with young children and people in isolated rural locations.

What are the disadvantages?

- It is not easy to ask complex questions – (although you could send the information in advance)
- Some people may see it as intrusive
- It may prove difficult to contact people
- The language barrier will need to be addressed if the person speaks little or no English
- It can be difficult to get a representative sample
- There is the potential for biased sample
- There is no visual data
- You often get a high refusal rate
- Households without a telephone or those that are ex-directory can be excluded
- Trained interviewers must be used
- It is easier for the respondent to be distracted than in a face to face survey
- Cold calling can often annoy the prospective respondent
- Sample results may not be representative.



What are the costs?

- Small surveys are relatively inexpensive if done in-house
- If contracted out a survey costs are likely to be much higher – running into the thousands of pounds.

What are the practicalities?

- Questions need to be short and to the point – more closed than open questions
 - You will need skilled questionnaire design
 - Interviewers need competent telephone techniques
 - You will need access to telephone numbers but be aware of data protection issues
 - You should consider a text telephone or minicom to communicate with people with a hearing impairment
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