



Gathering and interpreting the data for impact assessment: Overview



Quantitative methods



A **survey** is based on gathering information from a certain population group through their responses to questions. This method allows for collecting data from a wide range of groups, organizations and networks. The advantages of surveys are their versatility, efficiency (time and cost wise) and generalizability, since it allows for large population sampling (R. K. Schutt).

Surveys can be helpful tools when measuring the impact of said program as well, by asking participants how they evaluate the results of the program and what the perceived impact is (ES gairès).

In our example, a **survey on media literacy** could be given with specific questions on a recipient's past with media literacy, supplemented with exercises in which the recipient has to answer whether a certain piece is an example of fake news. Using this data and a statistical analysis program, the analyst would be able to determine whether there is a tendency, even a correlation, between the two factors (media literacy training and the ability to identify fake news).

Source: K. Schutt. Investigating the Social World: The Process and Practice of Research. London: Sage Publications, 2006, p. 230.

Mistakes to avoid while doing surveys



- 1** Survey questions must be asked of many people, not just one.
- 2** The same survey question must be used with each person, not tailored to the specifics or a given conversation.
- 3** Survey questions must be understood in the same way by people who differ in many ways.
- 4** You will not be able to rephrase a survey question if someone doesn't understand it because that would result in a different question for that person.
- 5** Survey respondents don't know you and so can't be expected to share the nuances of expression that help you and your friends and family to communicate.

Basic principles to follow



- 1** *Avoid confusing phrasing.* This means several things:
 - a) do not ask complex questions, as this can result in the person agreeing to one part of the question, but not the other, therefore, making it hard to answer.
 - b) do not use double negatives in questions, as this can confuse the recipient.
- 2** *Minimise the risk of bias.* Avoid asking loaded questions or using phrases that could be easily misinterpreted.
- 3** *Avoid making either disagreement or agreement disagreeable.* As much as 10 percent of respondents have been shown to agree just to be agreeable, rather than saying what they really think.
- 4** *Minimise fence-sitting and floating.* Fence-sitting is a phenomenon that describes respondents who do not feel strongly about the issue and tend to choose neutral answers (such as the middle in a ranged scale). A neutral option in your survey. Meanwhile, **floaters** are respondents who will choose the "I don't know" option if it is given to them, but would give their opinion otherwise. However, **forced-choice questions**, which do not include any ambiguous options, may also skew the results.
- 5** *Set concrete response categories.* Questions with fixed responses should only offer one possible response for the receiver - that is, the answers should not overlap (i.e., ranges of income, age or education).