



# Quantitative and Qualitative Methods



# Quantitative and qualitative methods

	Qualitative methods	Quantitative methods		Qualitative methods	Quantitative methods
<b>Purpose</b>	The aim is to understand reality, by taking the existence of diverse realities and attitudes into account.	The aim is to explain the monitored phenomenon, by classifying and calculating its features.	<b>Strengths</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• useful in selecting criteria for quantitative analysis;</li> <li>• provides broad and complex information about studied phenomenon;</li> <li>• analyzes a specific phenomenon in its context;</li> <li>• opinions of a larger number of stakeholders are taken into account (including those whose opinions are often not taken into account in quantitative studies).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the data represents a larger part of the population;</li> <li>• the data allows comparisons between countries, sectors, target populations;</li> <li>• an appropriate way to test hypotheses.</li> </ul>
<b>Time and structure of the study</b>	Social phenomena are analyzed without prior presumptions, and the data is collected and analyzed simultaneously.	Research questions are defined prior to collecting and analyzing data. Preconditions are determined.		<b>Weaknesses</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• not suitable for assessments of wide scale;</li> <li>• labor-intensive and time-consuming;</li> <li>• risks overestimating unrepresentative opinions;</li> <li>• risk of too much information and data.</li> </ul>
<b>The role of the analyst</b>	The analyst collects the data by interacting with the subjects.	The analyst collects the data by using certain tools (f.e., questionnaires) - the interaction is indirect.	<b>Examples of application</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• attitudes of interest groups, when evaluating the suitability of a certain program in a specific context;</li> <li>• attitudes of interest groups: towards the established product, the quality of obtained results and sustainability of impact.</li> </ul>
<b>Logic of analysis</b>	Trusting in subjective interpretations and opinions. Data is collected orally. Interviews, focus group discussions, case studies are used.	Aiming to present objective, generalizing and comparable information. Surveys, statistical analyses are used. Precise, formal procedures are followed.			

Source: "ES struktūrinės paramos vertinimo metodų gairės", 2009, 39-40.

# Qualitative methods



The **qualitative methods** are appropriate for gathering detailed information about a small number of cases or individuals, and it provides an opportunity to get a deeper understanding into the context and nuances of the research subject.

# Interview

## Qualitative data collection and analysis methods:

**Interview.** This method is most commonly used in social science research and evaluations of public policy. There are several types of interviews: **free conversation** (the respondent can freely express their opinion), **semi-structured** (the respondent answers preformed questions, but can freely interpret and rephrase them) and **structured** (inflexible, survey-type). When evaluation is to be conducted, **semi-structured interviews** are used most commonly.

When formulating interview questions, similar principles to what we have learned about survey questions apply, particularly not asking loaded or complicated questions, as well as not steering the interviewee in any direction by making one of the choices more agreeable. That being said, conducting an interview (a semi-structured one or in free conversation style) is way more flexible in that you, the interviewer, will **be able to specify questions as needed** and **draw new questions** from your interviewee's answers. You will learn a bit more about formulating interview questions in the course "Narrative structures".

Conducting interviews can help explain the way people perceive the essence and results of the program, project or training. It is not meant to represent the general population, but it can reveal important deeper insights by targeting people of interest.



# Focus groups

**Focus groups** consist of a small group of unrelated people who discuss the same topic and are moderated by the researcher. Participants must be competent and have different perspectives on the matter. This discussion will differ from the usual interview by being less structured and more importantly, conducted in a certain order. This allows the participants to speak more freely and in return, the researcher tends to get deeper answers and see different points of view. Discussions of several different focus groups should be conducted in order to check for consistency.

This can help evaluate a few relevant matters:

- a) relevance of a program, project, etc.,
- b) effectiveness and quality of the end result, as well as possible impact,
- c) sustainability of conducted activities.



# Focus groups: risks to look out for



- 1** Problem: participants do not have enough information and cannot participate in the discussion.  
Solution: present factual information to participants before the discussion.
- 2** Problem: participants are biased and uncritical.  
Solution: the balance between opinions should be ensured in the participant selection process.
- 3** Problem: the dynamics of the group do not let participants speak their mind, for example, an opinion leader or a common opinion emerges.  
Solution: an experienced moderator should conduct the discussion.
- 4** Problem: participants seek consensus and therefore do not express opposing, critical opinions.  
Solution: critical opinions can be identified during anonymous interviews.
- 5** Problem: the information obtained can become unreliable due to possible bias.  
Solution: the method should be used to determine attitudes, rather than factual information. Obtained information then should be verified by other sources of information.
- 6** Problem: participants speak different languages.  
Solution: ensuring that participants can speak the same language, or use translators.

# Participant observation



**Participant observation** is suitable for small group research during the implementation of the activities. This method allows the observer to monitor the participants' actions and understand what they mean to them; this is particularly useful when the participants are unwilling to share the necessary information. Though, the monitored groups may change their behaviour because they know they are being monitored. This can be mitigated by ensuring a long observation time so the observer can get acquainted with the observees and gain their trust. The observer must also be competent and familiar with the dynamics of the group, so as not to miss important information or evaluate them biasedly. After familiarising with some of the ways data can be collected and interpreted, in the next chapter, we will move onto the research methods of impact assessment.