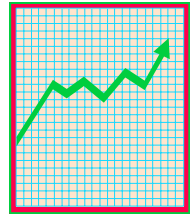


# Designing Surveys That Count



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*A Workshop Co-Sponsored by*

The Community Research Center  
At Keene State College

*And*

Monadnock United Way

July 24, 2002

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Facilitated by

Therese Seibert, Ph.D.

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# *I. INTRODUCTIONS*

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## **Community Research Center**

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## *II. What are Closed-Ended/Forced Choice Questionnaires?*

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### ➤ **Multiple choice questions**

#### *Example:*

In general, how would you describe relations in your workplace between management and employees?

1 = Very good

2 = Quite good

3 = Neither good nor bad

4 = Quite bad

5 = Very Bad

## ➤ **Differences in open-ended and closed-ended questions**

*Example:* Acme Clinic Asks...

**Open-ended:** How courteous are the people who make your appointments?

**Closed-ended:** The people who make my appointments are courteous. Circle one:

1 = Definitely agree

2 = Agree

3 = Disagree

4 = Definitely disagree

➤ **Used mainly for self-administered, mail, and phone surveys**

➤ **Generally not used for exploratory research**

➤ **Can measure knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors**

# *III. Advantages and Disadvantages of Closed-Ended Questions*

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## **Advantages:**

- **Easy to code** (Example: 1 = Strongly Agree; 2 = Agree; 3 = Disagree; 4 = Strongly Disagree)
- **Easy to enter**
- **Easy to analyze**
- **Easy to present**
- **Quick turnaround**
- **Enhanced reliability**
- **Less researcher bias**
- **High degree of anonymity**

# *Examples of How to Summarize Data*

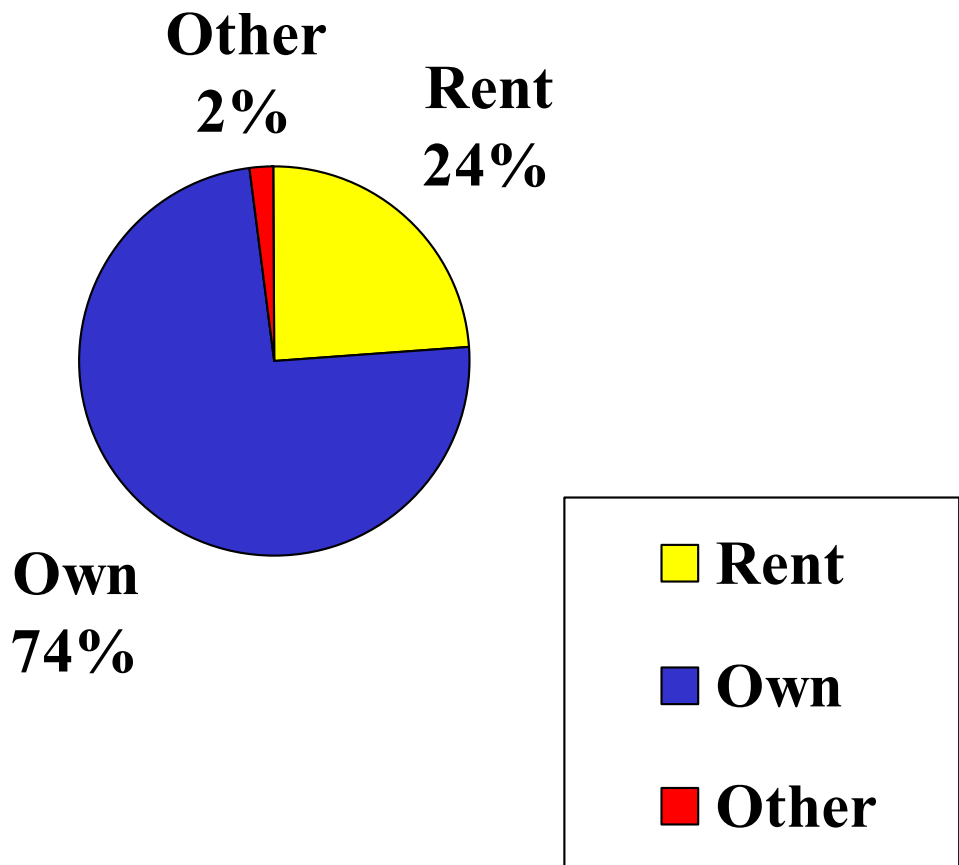
## **Characteristics of Respondents**

**Table 1: Basic Characteristics of Respondents**

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Mode</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>
<i>Age (686)</i>	44	44	42	11
<i>Distance to work (687)</i>	9	5	1	10
<i>Household size (693)</i>	3	2	2	1
<i>Number of dependents (691)</i>	1	0	0	1

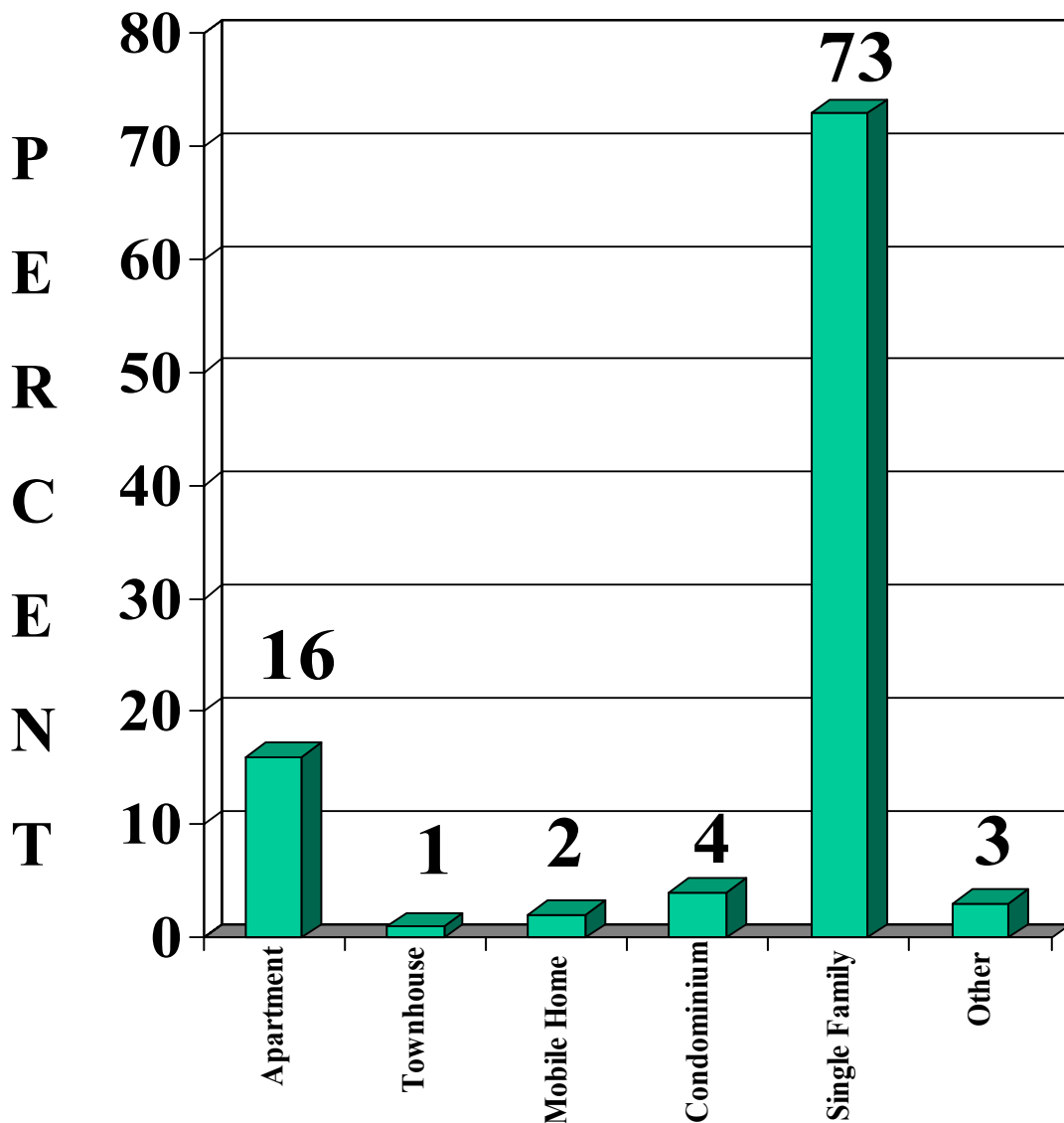
# Pie Charts:

## Chart 1: Percent Distribution of Housing Type



# Bar Graphs:

## Chart 2: Percent Distribution by Housing Type



Note that the percentages do not sum to 100 due to rounding.

## **Disadvantages:**

- **Harder to develop questions and response categories**
- **May force invalid responses**
- **Less depth and substance**

### *Example:*

During the past month, have you felt depressed?

0 = No

1 = Yes, once in a while

2 = Yes, some of the time

3 = Yes, most of the time

4 = Yes, all of the time

## **Disadvantages continued:**

➤ **Respondents unable to explain, qualify, or clarify answer**

*Example:*

Do you think it should be possible for a pregnant woman to obtain a legal abortion? Circle your response.

1 = Yes

2 = No

(Most Americans want to qualify their answers to this question.)

# *IV. Before You Begin: General Guidelines*

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- **Clearly state goals and objectives of the survey**
- **Address your own biases**
- **Explore available resources**
- **Clearly define and know your population**
- **Determine response format**
- **Decide on length**
- **Start with a statement then put in question form**
- **Define terms**

# *Explore Available Resources*

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## **Suggested Reading:**

Designing Surveys: A Guide to Decisions and Procedures by Ronald Czaja and Johnny Blair. Pine Forge Press, 1995. ISBN: 0803990561. *Provides an accurate account of how modern survey research is actually conducted, but with the needs and goals of a novice researcher in mind. Contains sections on designing and writing questions.*

How to Conduct Surveys: A Step by Step Guide by Arlene Fink and Jacqueline Kosecoff. Sage Publications, 1985. ISBN: 0761914099. *Gives many examples of survey questions and contains rules and guidelines for asking questions.*

Survey Research Methods by Earl Babbie. Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1990. ISBN: 0534126723. *A fundamental reference on how to conduct survey research. Good examples of survey questions with accompanying rules for asking questions.*

Evaluation Basics: A Practitioner's Manual by Arlene Fink and Jacqueline Kosecoff. Sage Publications, 1982. ASIN: 0803918976. *Tells how to write questions and how to use them appropriately in open and closed formats.*

Asking Questions by Seymour Sudman and Norman Bradburn. Jossey-Bass, 1982. ISBN: 0875895468. *Very good source for examples of how to write questions pertaining to attitudes, knowledge, behavior and demographics.*

# Suggested Internet Links:

## **Community Survey Questions**

<http://www.communitydevelopment.uiuc.edu/commsurvey>

*Wow! If you need to do any kind of community survey, this site has a ton of questions all laid out for you by various topics. You just choose what you want and the site will build the survey for you!*

## **Basics of Developing Questionnaires**

<http://www.mapnp.org/library/evaluatn/questnrs.htm>

*This site is a great place for beginners to start. The page covers all the basics to be aware of when starting to design a questionnaire.*

## **Survey Design**

<http://www.surveysystem.com/sdesign.htm>

*Another good introductory site. Great information on comparing the various methods of conducting a survey.*

## **The Design of Questionnaires in 12 Steps**

<http://www.webcom.com/ygourven/quest12.html>

*Twelve key steps to follow when designing a questionnaire. Although geared towards business marketing surveys, the steps apply to all good questionnaires.*

## **Brochures About Survey Research**

<http://www.amstat.org/sections/srms/whatsurvey.html>

*The American Statistical Association's brochure series on surveys. Very useful information. You will need Acrobat Reader to see the files.*

## **Formatting a Mail Questionnaire**

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu//pdffiles/PD/PD02400.pdf>

*Once again you'll need Acrobat Reader to view this information, but it's well worth it! It provides concrete examples of each design element covered.*

## **Guide to Questionnaires and Surveys**

[http://members.tripod.com/~frede\\_dast/conseill\\_a.html](http://members.tripod.com/~frede_dast/conseill_a.html)

*Contains many articles on a variety of topics around the creation of good surveys and questionnaires. This site's information is a bit more technical and had more depth, but is still understandable to the novice.*

# *Response Formats*

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## **Response Choices:**

### *Categorical (or nominal) Example 1*

Name or categorize your astrological sign. Check only one.

- |                                   |                                 |                                      |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aquarius | <input type="checkbox"/> Gemini | <input type="checkbox"/> Libra       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pisces   | <input type="checkbox"/> Cancer | <input type="checkbox"/> Scorpio     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aries    | <input type="checkbox"/> Leo    | <input type="checkbox"/> Sagittarius |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Taurus   | <input type="checkbox"/> Virgo  | <input type="checkbox"/> Capricorn   |

### *Categorical (or nominal) Example 2*

Which of the following books have you read? Check all that apply.

- |  |                                  |
|--|----------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Pride & Prejudice      | <input type="radio"/> Emma       |
| <input type="radio"/> The Vicar of Wakefield | <input type="radio"/> Bible      |
| <input type="radio"/> Catcher in the Rye     | <input type="radio"/> Moby Dick  |
| <input type="radio"/> Call of the Wild       | <input type="radio"/> Persuasion |

# Response Choices Continued:

## *Ordinal (example 1)*

Tell which of the following age groups you fit best. Circle yes or no for each.

<u>Years of Age</u>	<u>Yes (1)</u>	<u>No (2)</u>
Under 25	1	2
25 – 35	1	2
36 – 45	1	2
46 – 55	1	2
Over 55	1	2

## *Ordinal (example 2)*

How important to a college graduate's education is each of the following books and plays? Circle one number for each book or play on the scale.

<u>Books/Plays</u>	<u>Very</u>	<u>Somewhat</u>	<u>Not</u>
Oedipus Rex	1	2	3
Pride & Prejudice	1	2	3
Bible	1	2	3
Moby Dick	1	2	3
Wit	1	2	3

# Response Choices Continued:

## *Other ordinal scales commonly used:*

Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

Excellent, Very Good, Fair, Poor

Always, Very Often, Fairly Often, Sometimes,  
Almost Never, Never

Completely Satisfied, Very Satisfied, Somewhat  
Satisfied, Somewhat Dissatisfied, Very Dissatisfied,  
Completely Dissatisfied

Definitely True, True, Don't Know, False, Definitely  
False

None, Very Mild, Mild, Moderate, Severe

Use a neutral response only if valid (such as Don't  
Know, No Opinion, etc)

## *Numerical*

As of your most recent birthday, what number of  
years tells how old you are?

\_\_\_\_\_ years old

# *V. To Do & Not To Do:*

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## *DO:*

### **Be Concise**

*Poor:* How do you feel about building an ice arena in downtown Keene where the railroad property has been sitting unused for a number of years?

*Better:* An ice arena should be built on the railroad property in downtown Keene.

1 = Strongly agree

2 = Agree

3 = Disagree

4 = Strongly disagree

# ***DO:***

## **Use simple, clear language**

***Poor:*** How often do you punish your toddler?

***Better:*** How often do you put your toddler into timeout? Check only one.

- Once a day
- Several times a day
- Once a week
- Several times a week
- Once a week
- Several times a week

# ***DO:***

## **Make questions concrete**

***Poor:*** Did you enjoy the book?

***Better:*** Have you recommended the book to anyone else?

## **Use mutually exclusive and exhaustive categories**

***Poor:*** What is your marital status?

Married                       Single

***Better:*** What is your marital status?

Married                       Divorced

Separated                       Widowed

Never Married

# ***DO:***

## **Limit “skip” patterns**

Do you participate in sports?

1 = No (GO TO QUESTION 3)

2 = Yes (Check all sports that apply)

Football

Volleyball

Basketball

Soccer

Swimming

Other (Specify \_\_\_\_\_)

# ***DO:***

## **Use caution when asking personal questions**

***Poor:*** How much do you earn each year? \$ \_\_\_\_\_

***Better:*** In which category does your annual income last year best fit?

- \_\_\_ Below \$10,000
- \_\_\_ \$10,001-\$20,000
- \_\_\_ \$20,001-\$30,000
- \_\_\_ \$30,001-\$40,000
- \_\_\_ \$40,001-\$50,000
- \_\_\_ \$50,001-\$60,000
- \_\_\_ \$60,001-\$70,000
- \_\_\_ over \$70,001

# ***DO:***

## **Group topics**

- Care and Services
- Respite Services
- Educational Program Needs
- Support Service Needs

## **Order questions well** (See checklist)

**Make instructions clear** (Helpful to enumerate all responses)

## **Get peer evaluation**

## **Pre-test items**

## **Pilot test survey**

# *Checklist for Question Order:*

**\_\_\_ Natural sequence of time**

**\_\_\_ Most familiar to least familiar**

**\_\_\_ Avoid items that look alike**

**\_\_\_ Sensitive questions should be well after  
the start of the survey**

**\_\_\_ End with easy questions**

# ***DO NOT USE:***

**Information unless you can act on it**

*Example:* Do you support building a skyscraper in downtown Keene?

**Biased words/phrases**

*Example:* You wouldn't say that you are in favor of gun control, would you?

*Example:* In these uncertain economic times with the stock market down and corporate scandals on the rise, would you support more regulation of big businesses?

# ***DO NOT USE:***

**Double barreled questions (one thought per question, please)**

*Example:* Curtailing development and protecting the environment should be a top priority for “Our” town.

**Vague words or phrases**

*Example:* Do you consider yourself a liberal?

*Example:* How often do you read the newspaper?

# ***DO NOT USE:***

## **Abbreviations**

*Example:* Should a TANF recipient be allowed to pursue higher education?

*Example:* Which political party is responsible for expanding the size of the GDP?

## **Jargon or technical terms**

*Example:* India should formulate a stricter fertility policy.

## **Double negatives**

*Example:* Should the U.S. not oppose the world court?

# ***DO NOT USE:***

## **Slang**

***Example:*** How many kids do you have?

***Example:*** Should parents know the whereabouts of their teens 24/7?

## **Ambiguous phrases**

***Example:*** The death penalty should not be legal in most cases.

*VI. Exercises on  
Evaluating & Refining  
Questions (notes):*

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# *VII. Q and A:*

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# *Additional Notes:*

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