Designing Surveys That Count

A Workshop Co-Sponsored by

The Community Research Center
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Facilitated by
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I. INTRODUCTIONS

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

- 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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age (686)</strong></td>
<td>44</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Distance to work (687)</strong></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Household size (693)</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of dependents (691)</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Pie Charts:

Chart 1: Percent Distribution of Housing Type

- Rent: 24%
- Own: 74%
- Other: 2%
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

- 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

Suggested Reading:


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/conseil1_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

Response Choices:

*Categorical (or nominal) Example 1*
Name or categorize your astrological sign. Check only one.

☐ Aquarius  ☐ Gemini  ☐ Libra
☐ Pisces  ☐ Cancer  ☐ Scorpio
☐ Aries  ☐ Leo  ☐ Sagittarius
☐ Taurus  ☐ Virgo  ☐ Capricorn

*Categorical (or nominal) Example 2*
Which of the following books have you read? Check all that apply.

☐ Pride & Prejudice  ☐ Emma
☐ The Vicar of Wakefield  ☐ Bible
☐ Catcher in the Rye  ☐ Moby Dick
☐ Call of the Wild  ☐ Persuasion
**Response Choices Continued:**

**Ordinal (example 1)**
Tell which of the following age groups you fit best. Circle yes or no for each.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of Age</th>
<th>Yes (1)</th>
<th>No (2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 25</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 – 35</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 – 45</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46 – 55</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 55</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Books/Plays</th>
<th>Very</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Not</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oedipus Rex</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pride &amp; Prejudice</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bible</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moby Dick</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wit</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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:

**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):
VII. Q and A: