

# Administering the questionnaire survey

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Face-to-face Interview: A face-to-face interview is the method most extensively used in the research of any topic and based on a direct meeting between interviewer and interviewee. With personal contact, it is easier to acquire more information and one can also use visual materials such as cards, packages and logos to encourage response. Using face-to-face interview, trained interviewers administer the questionnaire personally to a respondent. The interviewer records the answers as the interview proceeds further.

The main disadvantages of face-to-face interviews are the geographical limitations they may put into effect on the surveys and the vast resources needed if such surveys need to be done nationally or internationally. The cost of training interviewers in questioning methods, traveling cost, and interpretation of response is also high. In addition, respondents might feel apprehensive about the ambiguity of their responses when they interact face-to-face interviews. In long interviews, either tiredness or edginess can affect the quality of responses as the interview progresses. Interviewers must be willing to face potentially unlikable and risky situations alone, be able to come up to strangers and need to have the personal skills to conduct an interview. Face-to-face interview can be negatively affected by the noticeable characteristics (gender, race, class) of an interviewer. For example, there might be different responses on questions such as abortion and attitudes to sexual mores if there is gender difference.

However, the advantage of face-to-face interview is that the interviewer has got the flexibility of adjusting questions as per the situation, clarify doubts, if any, and ensure that the responses are properly understood by repeating the

questions. Moreover, the interviewer can also use non-verbal cues from the respondent. Any embarrassment or stress experienced by the respondent can be felt through frowns, and other body language, unconsciously exhibited by any person.

#### Telephone Interview:

Telephone interviews are interviews that are held over the phone. Telephone interviews involve making telephone contact with selected sample members and asking the questions over the phone. Telephone interview methods allow skilled interviewers to build rapport yet maintain considerable respondent anonymity.

The main disadvantage of telephone interview is that the respondent could unilaterally terminate the interview without warning or explanation by hanging up the phone. It requires skilled professionals who could interact with the respondent in a friendly manner. Responses to sensitive questions can be affected adversely, as respondents feel reluctant answering such questions.

There are several advantages of telephone interview. It is a cheaper survey method, as no traveling is involved. Telephone surveys seem to be relatively unaffected by their length and can feasibly last for 30 minutes. In telephone and personal interviews, interviewers can check for missed questions and try to coax answers from reluctant respondents. Telephone interviewers do not require night and weekend travel and avoid the dangers of working alone with strangers.

#### Postal/Mailed Survey

Surveying by mail is a desirable option when the sample consists of

respondents with higher literacy levels and people having interest in the subject being surveyed. Mailing lists are used to reach the target population. Postal survey does not require skilled interviewers rather require a well-organized person with good clerical skills. Postal surveys do not require skilled professionals, as the surveys rely on respondents understanding and answering the questionnaire, it must be easy to follow and the meaning of questions should be self-satisfactory. If questions require respondents to consult with other people, or look up information, postal survey is the most suitable since it can be stopped and restarted at a later time.

Disadvantages of mail survey are many – it is slow, time is needed for questionnaires to reach people, it may take six to eight weeks. To improve response rates great care must be taken with the survey questionnaire and follow-up of non-responders. In mail survey, respondents may simply give up if they find the questionnaire difficult. Mail questionnaires have difficulty with boring questions. Open-ended questions are not suitable for mail surveys, as many people experience difficulties putting their ideas in writing. Unlike other survey methods, mail survey is not affected by sensitive or controversial questions, as they do not need to face any interviewer in person. In case respondents need to consult with other people, or look up information to complete the questionnaire, postal surveys could be the most suitable since these can be stopped and restarted at a later time.

#### References

Face to face surveys, viewed November 6, 2009,

What Are The Advantages And Disadvantages Of The Telephone Interviews?,  
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