

TIPS FOR DESIGNING A SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

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Here's a collection of tips from survey experts. Consider these when developing your y questionnaire.

1. Use an up-to-date mailing list

Seek a list that is trusted by experts, up-dated regularly and complete

2. Use a personalized cover letter

The one-page cover letter on letterhead stationary should:

- Explain what the study is about and its social usefulness
- Explain why the respondent is important to the study
- Promise confidentiality and explain of the identification number
- Include phone number to call if questions arise
- Thank respondent for participating
- Be signed by sender with blue ball point pen

3. Present the questionnaire in an appealing format

- Format should give a professional appearance and convey the impression that it is well thought out and important
- Use fonts that are easy to read
- Avoid a cluttered appearance -- Leave open spaces
- Establish a consistent vertical flow for questions
- Provide directions for how to answer. Brief directions can be placed at the beginning of the survey and more specific instructions can occur before categories of questions or specific questions

4. Use quality questions

- Clearly stated - Avoid jargon
- Short but not cryptic or vague -- Avoid long sentences
- Unidimensional (not double-barreled, e.g. "Was the service fast and friendly?")
- Understandable
- Unbiased
- Reasonable to answer (respondent knows the answer)
- Limit the "skip" questions (If yes, go to question xx)
- Opening questions should be easy and non-threatening
- Demographic questions such as age, marital status, and income are usually considered personal and should be avoided or placed at the end of the questionnaire. Don't ask them if you don't know how you will use the data
- Place questions in a logical order. Group questions of a certain category together and use headings as appropriate
- Some questions may seem similar. If this occurs underline the key word so the respondent can easily spot the differences. (For example: "helpful" and "useful" are similar but different)

5. Use appropriate response categories for your questions

Your response categories should be:

- Non-overlapping (each category is distinct from the others)
- Exhaustive (there are no gaps in the range of response choices)
- Appropriate to the question (the response choice is logical given the question)
- Consistent (all response choices are consistent with each other)
- Favor rating over ranking (Ranking means they place items in sequence such as first choice, second choice, etc. Ranking cannot be averaged. Rating means that they give an answer using a predetermined scale such as: Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor. Choices that are rated can be averaged.)
- Provide directions for how to answer. Don't assume that the respondent will automatically know how to answer. An example may be helpful. Are they supposed to check, circle, or darken in the box?
- When selecting response format remember that parenthesis (), braces [], and circles O, are preferred to horizontal lines _____.

6. Consider your analysis strategy before you finalize the survey format

- Make revisions to speed up computer data entry. Number the questions
- Favor "rating" questions to "ranking" questions. Rating responses are usually treated as interval data whereas ranking responses are considered ordinal
- Decide on analysis strategies for open-ended responses

7. Pilot test the instrument

- Does each question measure what it is supposed to measure?
- Are all the words understood?
- Do all respondents interpret the question in the same way?
- Are all response choices appropriate?
- Do respondents correctly follow directions?
- Is the range of response choices actually used?
- Does the mail-out questionnaire create a positive impression that motivates people to respond?

8. Aim for a high response rate

- A small sample with a high response rate is preferable to a large sample with a low response rate. Here is a helpful website with suggestions on sample size:
<http://agpublications.tamu.edu/pubs/ee/d1340.pdf>
- Use the "Babbie" response rate rule of 50-60-70. 50% response is "adequate", 60% is "good", and 70% is "very good"

9. Consider a strategy for non-respondent follow-up

- Set a due date 7 to 10 days after receipt of survey
- Include an identification number on each survey
- Include a stamped addressed return envelope
- Send a post card thank you \ reminder which arrives on due date
- Send a replacement survey to non-respondents one week after due date
- Telephone a sample of non-respondents and compare their responses to those obtained in the mail-out process

References

- Babbie, Earl R. (1979) *The Practice of Social Research*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Dillman, Don A. (1999) *Mail and Internet Surveys*. New York: Wiley.
- Sudman, Seymour and Norman M. Bradburn. (1982) *Asking Questions: A Practical Guide to Questionnaire Design*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

SocMon Caribbean training: examples of questions, coding and data table

Questionnaire

1. How many people live in this household? _____
2. How long has this household been located in the community? _____
3. What are the 3 most important occupations of household members in order of the amount of income generated.
1^s. _____, 2nd. _____, 3rd. _____
4. What is the household's primary, secondary and tertiary most important sources of income?
1st. _____, 2nd. _____, 3rd. _____
5. Is any member of this household a member of a formal and/or informal organizations?
Yes _____ Who? _____ What organization? _____
No _____ Who? _____ What organization? _____
6. How would you describe the condition of marine resources five years ago?
very good ___ good ___ not good not bad ___ bad ___ very bad ___.
7. How would you describe the conditions of marine resources today?
very good ___ good ___ not good not bad ___ bad ___ very bad ___.

Coding sheet

- | | | |
|-----------------|-----|---|
| 1. Respondent # | ___ | |
| 2. Village | ___ | 1=Placencia 2=Hopkins 3=Monkey River |
| 3. HHsize | ___ | # |
| 4. HHcomm | ___ | # |
| 5. HHocc1 | ___ | 1=Fishing 2=diveoper 3=tourgd 4=fishgd 5= |
| 6. HHocc2 | ___ | 1=Fishing 2=diveoper 3=tourgd 4=fishgd 5= |
| 7. HHocc3 | ___ | 1=Fishing 2=diveoper 3=tourgd 4=fishgd 5= |
| 8. HHinc1 | ___ | 1=Fishing 2=diveoper 3=tourgd 4=fishgd 5= |
| 9. HHinc2 | ___ | 1=Fishing 2=diveoper 3=tourgd 4=fishgd 5= |
| 10. HHinc3 | ___ | 1=Fishing 2=diveoper 3=tourgd 4=fishgd 5= |
| 11. HHfish | ___ | # |
| 12. HHrec | ___ | 1=Fishing 2=snor 3=diving 4=boating 5= |
| 13. Feinc | ___ | 1=yes 0=no |
| 14. Feinctact | ___ | 1=rest 2= 3= 4= |
| 15. HHorg | ___ | 1=yes 0=no |
| 16. Orgwho1 | ___ | 1=mother 2=father 3=son 4=daughter |
| 17. Orgwhat1 | ___ | 1=Plac Co-op 2= 3= 4= |
| 18. Orgwho2 | ___ | 1=mother 2=father 3=son 4=daughter |
| 19. Orgwhat2 | ___ | 1=Plac Co-op 2= 3= 4= |
| 20. Orgwho3 | ___ | 10=mother 2=father 3=son 4=daughter |
| 21. Orgwhat3 | ___ | 1=Plac Co-op 2= 3= 4= |
| 22. Orgwho4 | ___ | 1=mother 2=father 3=son 4=daughter |
| 23. Orgwhat4 | ___ | 1=Plac Co-op 2= 3= 4= |
| 24. Rescond5 | ___ | 1=VG 2=G 3=NGNB 4=B 5=VG |
| 25. Rescond | ___ | 1=VG 2=G 3=NGNB 4=B 5=VG |

Data table

Ref.	Resp #	Village	HHsize	HHcomm	HHocc1	HHocc2	HHocc3
001							
002							
003							
Ref.	HHinc1	HHinc2	HHinc3	HHfish	HHrec	Feinc	Feinctact
001							
002							
003							
Ref.	HHorg	Orgwho1	Orgwhat1	Orgwho2	Orgwhat2	Orgwho3	Orgwhat3
001							
002							
003							

Sample questions

1. Have you heard about the Negril Marine Park before now?
 yes ... In about what year did you first hear of the NMP? _____
 no

2. What, in your own opinion, should be the main purpose of the Negril Marine Park?
-
-

3. Thinking back from when you first knew of it, has the Negril Marine Park been beneficial?

Yes
 → How?

No
 → Why?

4. The marine resources of the area include the beaches, seagrass and mangroves, reefs and fisheries. How would you generally describe the condition of each of these marine resources based on the locations in the NMP that you are familiar with (*tick choice, write DK or NR*).
- ten years ago (1995)
 - five years ago (2000)
 - today (2005)?

	10 (a) Beaches	Ten years ago — 1995	Five years ago — 2000	Today — 2005
5	very good			
4	good			
3	neither good nor bad			
2	bad			
1	very bad			

5. Whose responsibility is it to solve problems within the Marine Park ? (*tick all that apply*)

- Government agencies e.g. NEPA, Fisheries Division
 Negril Coral Reef Preservation Society (NCRPS)
 Negril Area Environmental Protection Trust (NEPT)
 Negril-Green Island Area Local Planning Authority (NGIALPA)
 Parish Development Councils (Hanover and Westmoreland)
 Fishermen, watersports operators etc. who work inside the NMP

6. Which is the last type of school that you attended?

1. none
 2. primary (all-age to 10y)
 3. secondary (past 11y)
 4. post-secondary / technical
 5. university
 6. Other _____