

Shetland Partnership

Methods and Techniques



Surveys and Questionnaires

Surveys normally include a set of questions with a range of answers. They enable the collection of standardised, relatively structured data from a large number of people.

Suitable for:

Questionnaires and surveys are a good way to collect information, opinions or data from other people. This can be for gathering facts, like ages or incomes, as well as people's opinions, ideas, attitudes, knowledge, and experiences. They are effective for reaching a wide range of participants.



Type of engagement:



Consult

How to do it:

- Identify your participants. This will depend on the reason for your engagement.
- Design the survey or questionnaire. This is a crucial part of this research. It's important to ensure that the questions will enable you to gather the data you need.

Consideration should be given to the type of questions. Some commonly used types of questions are:

- Yes/No questions
- Category questions, for example ticking the box for the age group you are in
- Choosing from a list of options
- Agreeing or disagreeing with a statement
- Rating scales
- Open ended questions; although analysing these questions can take more time and effort, the detailed feedback they provide can be very useful.

- Ensure the survey includes an introduction covering: who is carrying out the survey, why it is being done, and how the results will be used.

As required under the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) a Privacy Notice must be included if personal data is being collected. Guidance on this can be found from the Information Commissioner's Office. It is also good to check your organisation's Data Protection Policy and seek advice.

Participants need to be able to understand the questions and be able to answer accordingly. It is a good idea to test the survey out with others before carrying it out to ensure it makes sense.

Consider ethical issues:

- Take care with wording of questions so they are not perceived as being judgemental or insensitive.
- Make sure to be inclusive. Questionnaires can exclude people who cannot read or write and people who do not speak the language, and consideration needs to be given to people who may not be able to respond to online surveys, if that's the method to be used.
- Surveys are usually anonymous and a name or identifying feature is not usually necessary. If it is, there should be a good reason for doing so. Care must be taken to ensure that individuals or small groups of people are not identifiable when the findings are presented.

Once you are happy with your survey, you can set it live online or print copies to share, depending on what you have decided will work best. Decide how long you would like the survey to be open for, and how you will promote it and reach participants. Not everyone who sees or receives a survey will respond, so bear this in mind regarding the response rate.

Close the survey, unless you would like to extend it to encourage more responses. From here, you can analyse the results. If you are using software, it may be able to help sort the information and analyse the responses.

If there are open-ended questions, you will need to look at ways to analyse qualitative data.

★ Advantages

Data can be collected in a consistent format

A wide range of people can be included

Surveys can include a mix of open and closed questions to gather both comments and statistical information (qualitative and quantitative)

Different formats can be used, such as online and paper copies

Surveys are generally inexpensive, especially online

Respondents can stay anonymous which might lead to more honest feedback.

⚠ Challenges

Not everyone will complete a survey, the response rate may be low

Survey fatigue - respondents may lose interest if the survey is too long, or if they have received many surveys around the same time

Misunderstood questions - it is important that surveys are designed well, communicated clearly and analysed carefully

Large volumes of responses, particularly for open-ended questions, can be time consuming and require specific skills.

Further information:

There are some useful guides on developing effective questionnaires available online, for example, this [step-by-step guide](#) produced by South Lakeland District Council and this [concise booklet](#), produced by East Suffolk Council.

Case study:

Access to Free Period Products Consultation – Ensuring that everyone who may need to access period products can obtain them free of charge as and when they are required

(see online at: <https://www.shetlandpartnership.org/examples-community-participation/access-free-period-products-consultation>)