

Collaborating with Survey Centers to Conduct Survey Research

National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research Web Series on Survey Methods



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Should you Conduct a Survey?

- Surveys are hard to do well and expensive so always ask yourself....
 - Is there existing survey data that I can use to answer my research question?
 - Is your research question appropriate for the survey research?
 - Do I have an appropriate level of funding?
- After you have reached a conclusion or would like to discuss these issues with someone then.
 - You should seek out experienced survey professionals often found in survey centers



Is There an Existing Source of Data to Answer my Research Question?

- Good places to find existing survey microdata and documentation:
 - ICPSR at the University of Michigan
 - <http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/ICPSR/>
 - IPUMS at the University of Minnesota
 - <http://www.ipums.org/>
 - NBER
 - <http://www.nber.org/data/>
- Survey centers can help you find and analyze these data sources

Is your question appropriate for survey research?

- Is my research question appropriate for survey methodology? Some work others do not...
 - Examples:
 - What proportion of the population visited a dentist in the past year?
 - Why did a person not visit the dentist in the past year?
 - How does behavior influence likelihood of a cavity, crown, root canal or dental emergency?
 - What proportion of the population is in need of dental services?
 - What proportion of the population has a cavity and does not know it?
 - What proportion of the population has gum disease?
 - What proportion is at risk of experiencing serious pain due to an unmet dental need in the next year?



Do I have the Appropriate Level of Funding?

- To do a survey well is more expensive than most people think
 - A minimum of \$50,000 is generally needed and cost only goes up from there
- Consult a survey center about costs of various components you are thinking of
 - I have seen survey costs range anywhere from \$20 per completed survey to \$2000 per completed survey
 - From web/mail intercept surveys on the low end to a survey combined with biomarker collection on the high end
- Researchers are often tempted to get surveys done cheaply by using graduate students and/or their own time
 - I would resist this as the quality of the work is often not reproducible nor up to scientific standards with appropriate documentation

Basics on Collecting Survey Data

- We can ask people about things they are likely to know
- Which of the following will people be able to provide a valid answer?
 - Do you have dental insurance coverage?
 - What is your premium?
 - What is your deductible?
 - How much did your last dental visit cost?
 - What did you pay out of pocket for your last dental visit?
 - During the past year were you told you had a cavity or needed a crown or root canal?
- Survey centers can also help you set up processes to link respondents to other sources of information (e.g., results from a clinical exam, x-ray, digital image, or claims data)
- Survey centers can also collect biomarkers (DNA, weight, blood (draws or spots), blood pressure, urine, etc.)



Why Engage a Survey Center?

- Surveys may look simple but...
 - Survey centers engage potential sources of error and know how to minimize them and their potential impact on scientific inference
 - We know how to create appropriate survey documentation and methodology reports which are essential reference materials when writing up results for scientific audiences
 - We know how to look for and analyze existing sources of survey data
 - We can foresee the problems you will have and provide you appropriate counsel to make informed decisions
 - We have established processes and protocols in place that have been scientifically tested and improved over 80 years of scientific survey research



When and How to Engage with a Survey Center?

- Contact a survey researcher as soon as you can if you are thinking of conducting a survey
 - If you are applying for a grant or asking for funding make sure to get a realistic cost estimate before submitting
- How to get pricing from a survey vendor:
 - Meet with them to discuss a ballpark figure and cost tradeoffs
 - Informally request pricing from select vendors
 - Formal RFP process



Different Types of Survey Centers:

- Those based in Universities
 - Academic Association of Survey Research Organizations
 - <http://www.aasro.org/>
- Those that do federal government contracting (e.g., NORC)
- Those that predominately do market research (Gallup)
- Some mix both market research with federal and state government work
- AAPOR Blue book is a good place to start to look for one
 - <http://www.aapor.org/source/bluebooksearch/index.cfm>



What Survey Centers can do for you

- Design Sample
- IRB/OMB issues
- Instrument development
- Mode(s) selection (in person, telephone, cell phone, web, mail)
- Develop operational procedures
 - Dialing landline and cell phones
 - Mixing survey modes (e.g., web and mail)
 - Collecting paradata ((number of phone calls to a number, amount of time to complete a phone interview, number of surveys mailed out to a home, etc.)



What Survey Centers can do for you (cont.)

- Best design for the research question
- Interviewer training
- Interview respondents
- Prepare data
 - Edit inconsistent data, and impute missing data
 - Develop coding schemes for open-ended responses
- Conduct disclosure limitation editing and review the data for threats to confidentiality



What Survey Centers can do for you (cont.)

- Link data to other sources of data
 - Claims, xrays, digital images, enrollment data, environmental sources of data
- Prepare methodology reports
- Collect biomarkers (and set up labs to process the specimens)
 - Including appropriate metadata and documentation following the data documentation initiative (DDI)
- Conduct analysis
 - Including appropriately handling the analysis of complex survey data
- Evaluate the quality of the data
- Investigate anomalies
- Write up results, reports and papers

Conclusion

- We are here to help and we look forward to assisting you both collect and analyze survey data
- Survey research centers are service related organizations that are the business of helping you conduct your research
- If you have a research question for which you would like to conduct a survey,
 - there is not existing survey data that can be used to answer your question,
 - and you have potential sources of funding we look forward to working with you
- If you are just not sure most survey centers are happy to spend time with you to develop your ideas
- Thanks and we look forward to hearing from you soon

Contact Information

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