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Lesson 18: Why should you consider the pot of vegetable soup when designing a survey?

Q: What do you think are some characteristics of a good survey?

Idea 1: Examine the part of a whole.

The first idea is to draw a sample.

We'd like to know about an entire population of individuals, but examining all of them is usually impractical, if not impossible.

We settle for examining a smaller group of individuals—a sample—selected from the population.



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Bias

Select a sample that represents the population fairly.

Sampling methods that, by their nature, tend to over- or under- emphasize some characteristics of the population are said to be biased.
Bias is the bane of sampling—the one thing above all to avoid.
There is usually no way to fix a biased sample and no way to salvage useful information from it.

- The best way to avoid bias is to select individuals for the sample at random.



Idea 2: Randomize



Idea 3: Sample size



Does a census make sense?



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Simple random sample



Defining the "Who": You Can't Always Get What You Want

The population is determined by the Why of the study. Unfortunately, the sample is just those we can reach to obtain responses— the Who of the study. This difference could undermine even a well-designed study.



The valid survey

It isn't sufficient to just draw a sample and start asking questions. We'll want our survey to be valid. A valid survey yields the information we are seeking about the population we are interested in. Before setting out to survey, ask yourself:

- What do I want to know?
- · Am I asking the right respondents?
- · Am I asking the right questions?
- What would I do with the answers if I had them; would they address the things I want to know?

Keep in mind the following three things:

1. Questions should be understandable by the individuals in the population being surveyed. Vocabulary should be at an appropriate level, and sentence structure should be simple.

2. Questions should, as much as possible, recognize that human memory is fickle. Questions that are specific will aid the respondent by providing better memory cues. The limitations of memory should be kept in mind when interpreting the respondent's answers.

3. As much as possible, questions should not create opportunities for the respondent to feel threatened or embarrassed. In such cases respondents may introduce a social desirability bias, the degree of which is unknown to the interviewer. This can compromise conclusions drawn from the survey data.



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