

# Data Gathering/Collection Methods

- Today businesses and organizations are connected to their clients, customers, users, employees, vendors, and sometimes even their competitors.
- Data can tell a story about any of these relationships, and with this information, organizations can improve almost any aspect of their operations.
- Data collection is defined as the procedure of collecting, measuring and analyzing accurate data using standard validated techniques.
- The approach of data collection is different for different fields of study, depending on the required information.

BASIS FOR COMPARISON	PRIMARY DATA	SECONDARY DATA
Meaning	Primary data refers to the first hand data gathered by the researcher himself.	Secondary data means data collected by someone else earlier.
Data	Real time data	Past data
Process	Very involved	Quick and easy
Source	Surveys, observations, experiments, questionnaire, personal interview, etc.	Government publications, websites, books, journal articles, internal records etc.
Cost effectiveness	Expensive	Economical
Collection time	Long	Short
Specific	Always specific to the researcher's needs.	May or may not be specific to the researcher's need.
Available in	Crude form	Refined form
Accuracy and Reliability	More	Relatively less

# 1) Interviews

- Almost anyone can come up with a list of questions, but the key to efficient interviews is knowing what to ask.
- Efficiency in interviewing is crucial because, of all the primary data collection methods, in-person interviewing can be the most expensive.
- There are ways to limit the cost of interviews, such as conducting them over the phone or through a web chat interface.
- But sometimes an in-person interview can be worth the cost, as the interviewer can tailor follow-up questions based on responses in a real-time exchange.

## 2) Surveys and Questionnaires

- Questionnaires and surveys can be used to ask questions that have closed-ended answers.
- While surveys are often less expensive than interviews, they won't be valuable if they aren't handled correctly.
- Surveys and questionnaires need to be carefully planned. Unlike an interview, where a researcher can react to the direction of a respondent's answers, a poorly designed questionnaire will lead the study nowhere quickly.
- Surveys can be conducted as interviews, but in most cases, it makes sense to conduct surveys using forms.

### 3) Observations

- Observation involves collecting information without asking questions.
- This method is more subjective, as it requires the researcher, or observer, to add their judgment to the data.

## 4) Documents and records(Case Studies)

- Using documents and records can be efficient and inexpensive because you're predominantly using research that has already been completed.
- Document- and records-based research uses existing data for a study.
- Attendance records, meeting minutes, and financial records are just a few examples of this type of research.

## 5) Focus Group

- A combination of interviewing, surveying, and observing, a focus group is a data collection method that involves several individuals who have something in common.
- The purpose of a focus group is to add a [collective element](#) to individual data collection.
- A focus group study can ask participants to watch a presentation, for example, then discuss the content before answering survey or interview-style questions.
- Focus groups often use open-ended questions such as, "How did you feel about the presentation?" or "What did you like best about the product?"
- The focus group moderator can ask the group to think back to the shared experience, rather than forward to the future.

## 6) Oral history

- Oral history might sound like an interview. Both data collection methods involve asking questions.
- But an oral history is more precisely defined as the recording, preservation, and interpretation of historical information based on the opinions and personal experiences of people who were involved in the events.



Method	Overall Purpose	Advantages	Challenges
<b>Surveys</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quickly and/or easily gets lots of information from people in a non threatening way</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>can complete anonymously</li> <li>inexpensive to administer</li> <li>easy to compare and analyze</li> <li>administer to many people</li> <li>can get lots of data</li> <li>many sample questionnaires already exist</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>might not get careful feedback</li> <li>wording can bias client's responses</li> <li>impersonal</li> <li>may need sampling expert</li> <li>doesn't get full story</li> </ul>
<b>Interviews</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand someone's impressions or experiences</li> <li>Learn more about answers to questionnaires</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>get full range and depth of information</li> <li>develops relationship with client</li> <li>can be flexible with client</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>can take time</li> <li>can be hard to analyze and compare</li> <li>can be costly</li> <li>interviewer can bias client's responses</li> </ul>
<b>Observation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gather firsthand information about people, events, or programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>view operations of a program as they are actually occurring</li> <li>can adapt to events as they occur</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>can be difficult to interpret seen behaviors</li> <li>can be complex to categorize observations</li> <li>can influence behaviors of program participants</li> <li>can be expensive</li> </ul>

Method	Overall Purpose	Advantages	Challenges
<b>Focus Groups</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore a topic in depth through group discussion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• quickly and reliably get common impressions</li> <li>• can be efficient way to get much range and depth of information in short time</li> <li>• can convey key information about programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• can be hard to analyze responses</li> <li>• need good facilitator for safety and closure</li> <li>• difficult to schedule 6-8 people together</li> </ul>
<b>Case Studies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand an experience or conduct comprehensive examination through cross comparison of cases</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• depicts client's experience in program input, process and results</li> <li>• powerful means to portray program to outsiders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• usually time consuming to collect, organize and describe</li> <li>• represents depth of information, rather than breadth</li> </ul>