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Course > Producing Data: Designing Studies > Observational Studies > Sample Surveys: Summary

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Sample Surveys: Summary

Learning Objective: Determine how the features of a survey impact the collected data and the accuracy of the data.

Let's Summarize

A sample survey is a type of observational study in which respondents assess variables' values (often by giving an opinion).

- Open questions are less restrictive, but responses are more difficult to summarize.
- Closed questions may be biased by the options provided.
- Closed questions should permit options such as "other: _____" and/or "not sure" if those options may apply.
- Questions should be worded neutrally.
- Earlier questions should not deliberately influence responses to later questions.
- Questions shouldn't be confusing or complicated.
- Survey method and questions should be carefully designed to elicit honest responses if there are sensitive issues involved.

Did I Get This

1/1 point (graded)

A midterm evaluation of a recitation instructor's teaching asked students to rate their instructor's preparation for class by choosing from one of the following: a) excellent; b) good; and, c) needs improvement. We may expect a summary of the instructor's teaching, based on the survey results, to

be:

☐ unbiased

☐ biased towards an unfavorable summary

☒ biased towards a favorable summary ✓

Answer

Correct:

Indeed, the question is biased toward a favorable summary, since there are two positive answers and only one negative one.

Submit

Did I Get This

1/1 point (graded)

For which of the following questions would we expect the most honest responses?

☒ How tall are you? ✓

☐ How many times in your life have you used illegal drugs?

☐ What is the lowest course grade you received last year?

Answer

Correct: Indeed, this is the question that is the least sensitive.

Submit

Did I Get This

1/1 point (graded)

What additional option should be included in the following survey question: "How often do you dream in black and white?" Options are "always," "sometimes" and "never."

☐ rarely

☒ not sure ✓

☐ three times a week

Answer

Correct:

Closed questions should permit options such as "other:_____" and/or "not sure" if those options may apply. In this case, the individuals may not recall how often they are aware of the colors in their dreams.

Submit

Did I Get This

1/1 point (graded)

Consider this survey question: "Every year, thousands of people, including children, are injured or killed because of the widespread availability of firearms in the United States. Do you agree that our country needs stricter gun control laws?" What is the response that surveyors hope to elicit?

☒ yes ✓

☐ no

☐ unknown

Answer

Correct:

Indeed, the question is worded in a way that highlights negative facts about the availability of guns.

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