

Questionnaire Critique – UK Participation Survey 2023/24

Overview

The UK Department for Culture, Media and Sport's Participation Survey 2023/24 is a publicly released questionnaire that gathers information on public involvement in arts, heritage, culture, and sport across England (Department for Culture Media and Sport, 2023). Its aim is to track engagement and inform policymaking.

Format and Layout

The survey is logically structured, with sections on general participation, specific activity types, and demographic details. However, it is over twenty pages long, which can increase respondent fatigue and reduce completion rates. This is a known issue in lengthy surveys (Welz and Alfons, 2023). The absence of progress indicators or an introductory briefing may further reduce respondents' motivation to complete the survey fully.

Question Design

Many questions use standard frequency or Likert scales, making data easy to quantify. However, some scales lack clear midpoint labels, which may introduce interpretation variance (Wu, Zhao & Fils-Aime, 2022). Terms like "cultural activity" remain undefined, which risks inconsistent responses. Including brief explanations or examples would improve clarity. A key gap is the lack of questions exploring reasons for non-participation. Without such items, policymakers may overlook structural barriers like cost, accessibility, or transportation issues. Optional open-text responses are also

absent, limiting qualitative insight and preventing discovery of trends not anticipated by designers.

Demographic questions include sensitive topics like health, income, and disability yet offer no opt out options. This may reduce honesty, as some individuals may feel uncomfortable disclosing such information (Wu, Zhao and Fils-Aime, 2022).

Mode Limitations

The paper version of this survey lacks dynamic features like skip logic. As a result, non-participants are asked questions irrelevant to their experiences, increasing burden. It also fails to ask about digital participation, such as streaming or online engagement. This is a significant omission since digital participation surged after COVID 19 (Crawford and Serhal, 2020).

Recommendations for Improvement

Introducing a concise introductory statement with survey goals and estimated time would build respondent trust. Question wording should include definitions of key terms, and all scales should have full labels. It is important to add an item exploring barriers to participation. Demographic questions should include "prefer not to say" options. Including at least one open-ended question should help capture richer insights. Finally, offering a digital version with adaptive skip logic would improve respondent experience and data precision.

Conclusion

While the Participation Survey is well-structured and methodologically solid in many respects, it would benefit from adjustments such as improving question clarity,

addressing participation barriers, incorporating digital habits, offering optional demographic responses, and offering an adaptive online version. These enhancements would enrich its inclusivity, data quality, and policy relevance.

References:

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