

Unit 6 – Questionnaires

This analysis was performed on the 2022 questionnaire from OfWat, a company that regulates the water sector in England and Wales. The survey was performed to find out the impact of the cost-of-living crisis in respondents to the survey.

The survey can be found online at the following address -

<https://www.ofwat.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Cost-of-living-questionnaire-Final.pdf>

Initial analysis of the questionnaire shows that there was a response of approximately 2000 people. Whilst this is a decent number of responses, it does not give any indication, what this is as a percentage of the population as a whole.

The survey begins with a summary of racial profiling, from respondents that completed the survey. It is not totally clear why this is included, but it is assumed to be there, to see if there are any noticeable differences between different races in their responses, or if the responses are spread out evenly throughout the population, regardless of race.

Question QC1, relates to grass colour. There is no reason given why it is included, as it is a strange question, but all answers except green, are set to be excluded. One can only assume, that this is there to identify “bot” or computer answered surveys from real-people answered surveys, and to discard them.

The standard “respondent profiling” continues for the next few questions, to identify how many people are living in each household, combined income levels of residents etc. This data can be used later, to identify trends.

The main, relevant part of the survey begins, with Cost of Living on page 7. It can be noted, that there are a lot of questions, where the possible answers are not going to be exact, whereas others will fit to an exact choice.

The survey has examples of both quantitative and qualitative type questions included, but it seems that it will rely on qualitative data more, as there are a number of questions that can only be answered based on personal accounts or feelings.

Questions 7, 12, and all question 13 sub-questions, could potentially be answered differently, from respondents with the same exact situation, simply because a sliding scale of 1-10, with questions such as what do you expect, or how often, which are not measurable variables without some defined and repeatable guidelines in place.

The purpose of the survey needs to be understood. If the goal is to get some “high-level” data that shows trends against personal circumstances such as income and racial profile, then the existing survey should support that goal. If more detailed analysis is required, then many of the questions would need to be changed, to show options only to answer based on specific factors or figures – no personal interpretation, and repeatable.

If there is any possibility of personal interpretation, even via unconscious bias, it is not possible for the assessment to be quantitative, as it would not be repeatable. Repeatability, especially by other people, is key to analysis being quantitative. It appears that the aim of the survey, is to try and get a “feel” for how people are coping under the current financial conditions.

That being said, there are still benefits to evaluating qualitative data, especially with online surveys of this type. Braun et al (Braun et al, 2020) notes that online qualitative surveys also facilitate affordable and often quite easy access to large geographically dispersed populations, and that these surveys allow researchers to hear from a larger and more diverse sample than is possible with smaller-scale studies (quantitative).

It is also possible to use the qualitative data obtained from the initial study, to try and formulate an effective quantitative survey. Arora (Arora, 2022) notes that “qualitative research often precedes quantitative. It helps generate hypotheses to further understand quantitative data, and both generate valid causal influences”. Essentially, the option is there to take the research further if desired.

References:

Arora, Krish. (2022). Win with Research: When to Use Quantitative vs. Qualitative Research. Available from: <https://heymarvin.com/resources/2022/09/19/qualitative-research-vs-quantitative-research/#:~:text=Qualitative%20research%20often%20precedes%20quantitative,to%20generate%20valid%20causal%20influences>.

[Accessed 22 October 2023].

Braun, Virginia. Clarke, Victoria. Boulton, Elicia. Davey, Louise. Mcevoy, Charlotte. (2020). The online survey as a qualitative research tool. Available from: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/epdf/10.1080/13645579.2020.1805550?needAccess=true>

[Accessed 22 October 2023].