

# Surveys

UNM Evaluation Lab  
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# Pros of Using Surveys

- Fairly inexpensive once developed.
- Surveys are familiar to most people.
- Likely to collect a representative sample if you set up the right sampling design.
- Surveys provide anonymity to participants who may be more comfortable sharing in writing.
- You ask the same question to everyone. That means there's no risk of interviewers rephrasing/changing the question (evaluator/ interviewer bias).
- You can replicate this process easily for other surveys.

## Cons of Using Surveys

- Risk of low response rates (either few people answer and/or do not complete the survey).
- Surveys assume respondent can read or write.
- You can't be sure who answered or if someone helped.
- It takes time and several iterations to write a good survey.
- No immediate chance for follow up.

## Solution

- ➔ Call ahead of time and/or send reminders. Consider surveying a larger population. Survey on site.
- ➔ Consider interviewer-administered surveys.
- ➔ Call ahead of time to confirm the phone number/address are correct. Let them know the survey/link will arrive soon.
- ➔ Run a test survey with 2 or 3 clients of your first ***polished*** draft.
- ➔ Consider adjusting future surveys.

# Writing survey questions

You can use existing surveys, but if you must write your own...

## Type of questions

open ended questions – use sparingly when you want to capture experiences, insights, beliefs, and values

Close ended questions - You are clear about the range of answers

# Do's and don'ts on how to write the questions

**Keep an eye out  
for:**



**BAD:**

Are the program's duration and content what you expected?

**BETTER:**

Split into two questions, one for duration and one for content

**Keep an eye out  
for:**



**BAD:**

Do you think your clinician is doing a good job?

**BETTER:**

Keep your tone neutral:

How would you rate your satisfaction with your provider during your last appointment?

**Keep an eye out  
for:**



**BAD:**

How difficult is it for you to show up to appointments? (assumes it is difficult)

**BETTER :**

Some clients find it difficult to show up to appointments.

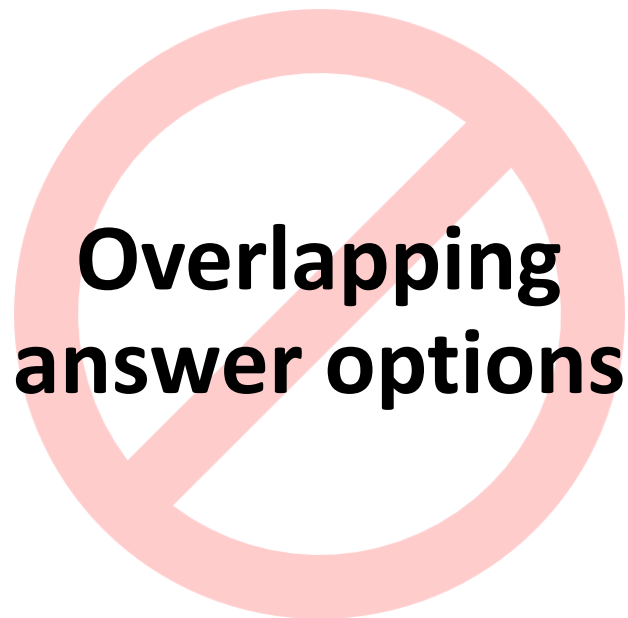
Have you had any difficulty showing up to appointments with your provider in the past 30 days?

Yes No

If Yes, what was the main difficulty?



**Keep an eye out  
for:**



Some clients find it difficult to show up to appointments.

Have you had any difficulty showing up to appointments with your provider in the past 30 days?

Yes No

If Yes, what was the main difficulty?



If a person has more than one difficulty getting to the appointment, allow them to mark them

OR

Tell them to pick the biggest challenge

# Try for questions that:

Are clear and specific about the subject.

- How did you learn about us? vrs How did you learn about our community garden?

Consider timeframe if you want them to recall something they might do/feel regularly

- How many hours a week did you normally work in the past 3 months?

Focus on positive/action statements.

- Please tell us if you agree or disagree with the following statement:
  - I never take off my safety gear vrs
  - I always wear my safety gear

Are relevant to your evaluation aims (beware of data greediness)

- If in doubt about whether to include a question that sounds *interesting*, go back to your aim and weigh *how* the question would contribute to address it

Questions?

Thank you!

Extra stuff on writing survey questions

# Few things to keep in mind from survey design research

- Question writing elicits four steps for a respondent
  - Understanding the question and deduce their intent (what are they getting at with this question?)
  - Think back to the experience/thought being elicited
  - Summarize all that comes to mind into a single judgement
  - Write/select answer based on the format of the question
- An Optimizing respondent will follow these steps
- A Satisficing respondent will try for shortcuts

# Few things to keep in mind from survey design research...

- From Krosnick and Presser pg266: The likelihood of satisficing is thought to be determined by three major factors:
  - task difficulty,
  - respondent ability,
  - and respondent motivation
- Writing engaging questions (situation based, properly introduced surveys) will keep respondents engaged (won't engage in satisficing)
- Answer options in Likert scales are useful but...
  - Lower schooling means shorter scales are better
  - Middle point desirable if you have range of individuals who are in or close to the middle (fair representation of opinion)

# Few things to keep in mind from survey design research...

- If you have a “Likert” ascending continuum (nothing, a little, some, a lot) consider a continuous scale:
- Example: choose point along the line to show how satisfied you are with your experience at our store. The farther to the left you go, the least satisfied you are, and the more to the right you go, the more satisfied you are:



\* To analyze, split the line in as many categories as it makes sense for your sample. Start at 9 (gives you a middle point) and consolidate as needed



# Few things to keep in mind from survey design research...

- Acquiescence in Likert scales or Primacy scale: when the answer scale is repeated, respondents pick the same option (extreme satisficing: no cognitive effort at all!)
- Most likely:
  - among low SES respondents
  - Question is unclear
  - Cognitive burden (questionnaire too hard and/or too long)
- Consider splitting the answers: agree or disagree? If agree, would you see extremely or somewhat? Very burdensome, though.
- Consider splitting items (avoid long tables with same scale likert)