



Organizational Surveys

Survey Research Laboratory
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Presenter: Tim Johnson



Types of Organizations

- ◆ For-profit, not-for-profit
- ◆ Public, private
- ◆ Different functions, for example:
 - ◆ Business
 - ◆ Government
 - ◆ Educational
 - ◆ Service
 - ◆ Criminal justice
- ◆ Size varies: large, medium, small
- ◆ Multi-site, single site
- ◆ Local, national, international

Some SRL surveys of organizations

◆ For-profit organizations

- ◆ Fortune 500/1000 corporations
- ◆ Small technology firms along I-88 corridor
- ◆ Chicago companies regarding minority hiring

◆ Not-for-profit organizations

- ◆ Crime laboratories in the United States
- ◆ Public schools in Illinois
- ◆ Substance abuse treatment facilities in Illinois
- ◆ Local municipal governments
- ◆ Homeless service providers
- ◆ Food pantries
- ◆ Health care facilities
- ◆ Academic survey research centers

Major difference between organizational and household survey?

Organizational survey respondent can use information systems instead of recall to answer many survey questions.

Unique Aspects of Org. Surveys

- ◆ Existence of information systems (records)
- ◆ Need to identify the most appropriate respondent(s)
- ◆ May need to accumulate data from multiple respondents to complete a single questionnaire
- ◆ May be a distinction between who has the authority and who has the ability to report the data

Necessary Conditions for Collecting Data in Org. Surveys

- ◆ Information must be available
- ◆ Cost of collecting the information must not be excessive (especially for the organization)
- ◆ Must identify the right contact person
- ◆ Organization must not refuse to give information for reasons of confidentiality

Organizational Survey

Response Process (Willimack et al. 2001)

1. Encoding in memory/record formation
2. Selection/identification of respondent
3. Assessment of priorities
4. Comprehension of data request
5. Retrieval of relevant information from memory and/or existing records
6. Judgment of the adequacy of response
7. Communication of the request
8. Release of the data

(note: stages in red are at the organizational level;
stages in blue are at the individual level)

Identifying & Contacting Respondents

◆ Preliminary screening

- Best way to identify most appropriate respondent and verify organization eligibility
- Be prepared to answer questions about the survey from Gatekeepers and other informants

◆ Advance letters

- Provides legitimacy & prepares respondent

◆ Clear designation of appropriate respondent

- When not clear, questionnaires may “float” through the organization

Selecting Appropriate Respondent is Key Because:

- ❖ Different respondents in same org. may:
 1. Have differing knowledge of available records encoded in memory
 2. Comprehend questions differently
 3. Have varying degrees of access to different records and varying abilities to retrieve data from them
 4. Make different judgments regarding the adequacy of the information retrieved
 5. Communicate the response in different manners

Appropriate respondent should be authoritative because

- ◆ Authority is manifested in several key decisions, including:
 1. The survey participation decision
 2. Delegation of the response task (i.e., the selection of the organizational respondent)
 3. Assessment of the priority of the response task relative to the respondent's other duties

In practice, however, ...

Survey informant within the organization is often selected based on convenience, rather than as being optimal.

Assessment of Priorities

- ◆ Priorities established by the business dictate the relative importance of activities performed by its employees

Organizational Assessment of Priorities

- ◆ Organizations give priority to those activities that are required to keep it open and growing.
 - Survey participation is considered a nonproductive activity, resulting in a cost
- ◆ Orgs. will weigh response burden against organizational goals
- ◆ Many organizations also strive to be good citizens and to have a positive public image

Large Company Assessments of Priorities

1. Requests from management/investors
2. Preparation of annual reports, IRS filings
3. Other periodic financial statements
4. Other government regulatory requirements
5. Other government data requests (i.e., Census Bureau, other statistical units)
6. Non-governmental data requests

Strategies for Minimizing Nonresponse

- ◆ With reluctant respondents
 - Present survey as being consistent with the organization's goals
 - ◆ Organizations more readily make participation decisions using objective information than do households
- ◆ Avoid seasons when workloads are heaviest, as survey requests will have lowest priority

Beware the Gatekeeper

- ◆ Seldom an issue in household surveys
- ◆ A major issue in many organizational surveys
 - Gatekeeper is a formal permanent role in many organizations (i.e., receptionist, secretary, administrative assistant)
- ◆ Be prepared to negotiate

Response Rate Formulas

$$\text{Unweighted RR} = \frac{\# \text{ responding eligible reporting units}}{\# \text{ eligible units in survey}}$$

--indicates the proportion of eligible units that cooperated.

$$\text{Weighted RR} = \frac{\text{Total weighted quantity for reporting units}}{\text{Total estimate quantity for all eligible reporting units}}$$

--indicates the proportion of an estimated population total that is contributed by respondents.

Modes of administration for organizational surveys

- ◆ Paper & pencil (papi) are probably still the most common
- ◆ Web surveys also increasing in popularity and are often used as part of mixed mode studies
- ◆ Faxing shorter questionnaires can be very effective
- ◆ Telephone surveys may sometimes be necessary
- ◆ Face-to-face interviews are expensive and require special training for interviewers; are thus less common in practice

Questionnaire Design

- ◆ Basic household questionnaire design principles most apply to org. surveys
- ◆ The labor-intensive nature of survey response may be exacerbated by the need for multiple respondents and data sources.
- ◆ See Willimack et al. (2004) & Dillman papers/book for additional recommendations regarding instrument design

To learn more:

- ◆ Consult workshop bibliography at:
www.srl.uic.edu
- ◆ Consult with SRL staff at:
312-996-5300
- ◆ Send e-mail to Johnson at:
timj@uic.edu



Thank you.