Point in Time Survey Glossary

The purpose of this document is to provide some key terms that are regularly used to describe point in time survey design and implementation.

1. **General Survey Terms**

    Respondent: A subset of the overall participant population of an SSP, an individual who completes the PiT survey.

    Consent: When conducting research, informed consent is required for any respondent (often referred to as "human subjects"). For a point-in-time survey, consent means informing respondents of the topics to be discussed, the risks and benefits of participation, and the manner and form in which data will be collected and confidentiality will be maintained. At that point, respondents should be given the opportunity to agree to participate in the survey or not. This process can be verbal or written and the outcome should be recorded by staff digitally or in writing.

2. **Survey Design**

    Goal: Broad aims that define what you want to learn and accomplish with your survey.

    Objective: Measurements or topic areas that permit you to meet your goals. Developing objectives will help you ensure you are asking the right questions and get the correct answers. To understand whether objectives were met, they will need to be SMART – specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound.

    Survey Question: A tool to generate data that will measure some characteristic of interest in the project. Various question phrasing and question types could be used to measure the same underlying attribute.

    - **Closed-Ended Question:** As opposed to an open-ended question that generates a textual response, a closed-ended question generates a limited set of responses that can readily be coded in a database with some number or symbol that represents a response. Multiple-choice, ordinal, interval, and ratio questions generate closed-ended responses.
    - **Open-Ended Questions:** Questions that ask for a free-form verbal or written response.

    Question Types: Broadly speaking, four question types exist corresponding to the type of data each generates: categorical (or nominal), ordinal, interval, and ratio. How you write your question impacts how you can analyze your results.

    - **Categorical questions** are questions where there are two or more possible answers but there is no order to those answers. Examples include yes or no questions and checklists, where the respondent is asked to choose one or more (up to a certain amount or all that apply) items from a list of items.
        - *Example: From the following list, select what single language you are most comfortable speaking.*
        - *Example: From the following list, select all languages you speak.*

- **Ordinal questions:** Similar to categorical questions, except with a clear order, including ranges or rank order.
  - *Example: How many languages do you speak? (1, 2-4, 5 or more)*
  - *Example: From the following list of languages, select the one you are most comfortable speaking, followed by the one you are second most comfortable speaking, and so on for all languages you speak.*
- **Continuous questions:** Elicit a numeric answer that has an infinite number of possible answers and includes an absolute zero.
  - *Example: How many languages do you speak? (fill in the blank)*
- **Interval questions**
  - **Frequency Scale:** A commonly used scale to measure the frequency of some event. Commonly used labels or anchors are: Always – Frequently – Sometimes – Rarely – Never
  - **Likert or Likert-Type Scale:** Generally, the respondent is presented with a statement and is asked their level of agreement with the statement by selecting a point on the discrete scale anchored with verbal statements and frequently with numbers. The scale should be balanced between positive and negative agreement options but can force a choice (by not presenting respondents with a neutral option, as with a 6-point rating scale with three positive and three negative options but no neutral).
    - **Example:** *On a scale of 1 (not at all) to 5 (fluent), how comfortable are you speaking English?*

Pilot Tests (also known as a Pretest): Final testing of individual questions or survey instrument before launching the survey. Members of the population or other stakeholders are asked to take the survey while being observed and interviewed. Goal is to find ambiguous language and other minor imperfections that would affect instrument validity.

Skip patterns (or branching logic): An alteration in the flow of the survey based on answers to prior question(s), or other known information about the respondent, which directs the interviewer to a certain question.

3. **Survey Implementation**

Eligibility Criteria: Factors used to determine whether a person is eligible (inclusion criteria) or not eligible (exclusion criteria) to participate in a survey. Eligibility criteria ensure that a survey is sampling the correct population to get the desired information. Eligibility criteria may include previous interaction with the program, age, risk behavior, and more.

Sampling Strategy: the approach to recruiting and/or identifying potential survey respondents, with the goal of identifying a group that is representative of the overall population. Sampling may be either probabilistic (every member having an equal chance of selection) or non-probabilistic. The two most common point in time survey sampling strategies are listed below.

- **Convenience sample:** A method that uses people who are readily available and thus "convenient." However, the convenient group may also have some bias toward the topic of the research. While response rates may be higher, this is a non-probability sampling

process, meaning that the results cannot be said to represent a broader population (generalizability).

- **Random Sampling:** A probability sampling process where every member of the population has an equal chance of being invited to take the survey.

Bias: Biases are what lead survey results to be different from reality. They occur in every survey but being aware of the primary bias types can help you account for them.

- **Selection bias:** Any bias that leads to the survey reaching the wrong group of respondents. Examples include sample bias (excluding a certain type of person) and confirmation bias.
    - An example of sample bias would be if an SSP wants to learn about how their participants utilize their services but they only interview people who inject and not those who don't inject. Their results will speak only to the experience of their participants who inject.
- **Information bias:** Any bias where there's something about how the actual survey questionnaire is constructed that encourages a certain type of answer, leading to a measurement error. Examples include recall bias, social desirability bias, and interviewer bias.
- **Leading or Loaded Language:** A type of bias where the phrasing of a question leads the respondent towards selecting a particular response option, leading to compromised data validity.

Resources:

- https://asq.org/quality-resources/stakeholders#Identifying
- https://greatbrook.com/survey-glossary/
- https://clinicalinfo.hiv.gov/en/glossary
- CDC definitions

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