

Maximising Data Quality A Holistic approach



Introduction

With online health surveys to capture participants experiences, needs, attitudes, behaviour and outcomes becoming increasingly common, we need to focus on the challenges for the research this brings and the resulting quality of data collected.

In this eGuide we review some of the key drivers of online data quality and offer best practice that will help achieve high quality results for your next online survey.

Ask the right questions

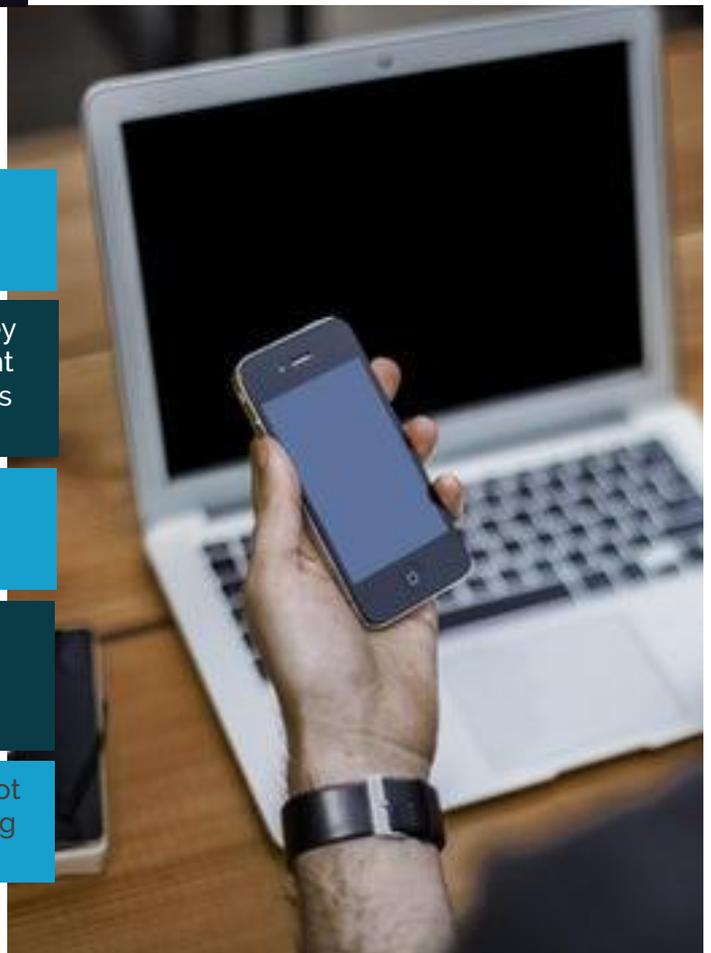
Avoid the use of 'Yes or No' questions as these tend to be too broad to capture the strength of respondents answers.

Minimise the use of open-ended questions as they can be cognitively demanding for the respondent to answer. If you are using open-ended questions make them specific and easy to answer.

Keep your questions neutral and avoid making assumptions about respondents behaviour and experiences etc.

Keep your questions simple and short (20 words max) and only ask one thing at a time. Complex questions should be broken into individual questions.

At least test your questions on people who are not closely associated with the project before fielding your questionnaire.

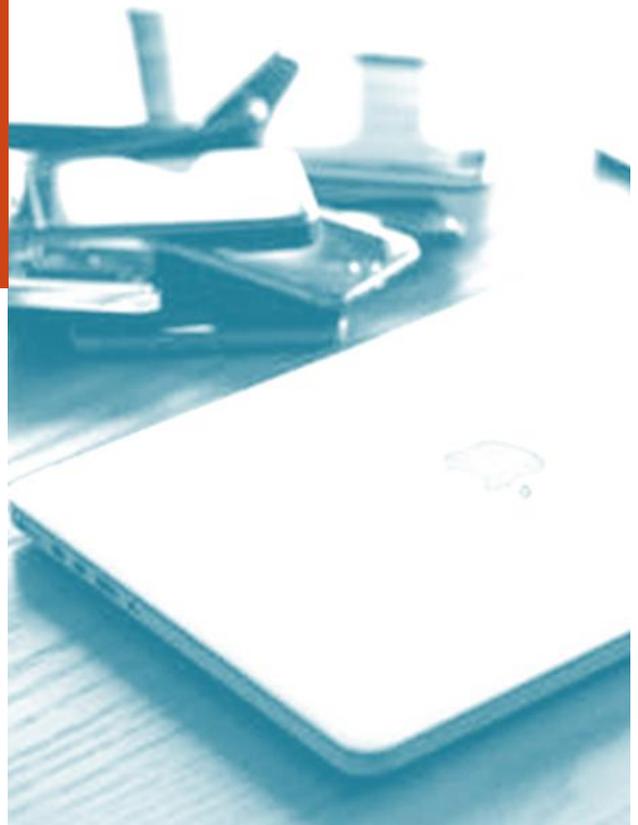


Design the questionnaire to provide a good experience for the respondent as this has a vital link to the quality of the results.

Focus on respondent engagement because when respondents who perceive completing a questionnaire as an enjoyable activity are far likelier to devote effort and thought to its completion, thus giving more valuable answers.

In the design of the questionnaire think about the respondent's feelings in terms of:

- **Autonomy:** Feeling free to do something or not
- **Competence:** Feeling good at something
- **Relatedness:** Feeling that like-minded people do the same
- **Value:** Feeling that what one is doing has meaning



Autonomy

Click to continue when you are ready.

Competence

You are the expert here.

Relatedness

People with the same experiences as you are also taking part in the survey.

Value

Thank you for your answers, that's very helpful.

Tips for designing surveys for mobile phones:

1. Start with the smallest screen and size up
2. Design all functional elements first
3. Make text boxes as large as possible (you'll get longer responses)
4. Test on multiple devices, horizontally and vertically
5. Minimize need to scroll
6. Avoid graphics

Keep the survey short

Research has shown fatigue sets in and data quality drops off after about 15 minutes. As a consequence respondents offer fewer words in open-ended questions and select answers without giving the question much thought.

Surveys can be shortened in two ways: **literally**, by reducing the actual length of the questionnaire, and also **cognitively**, by reducing the perceived length.

Reducing the length of the questionnaire:

- Avoid long introductions and reward information screens
- Challenge the need for each question: What does this question tell us? How will we use the answer?

Reducing the perceived length of the questionnaire:

- Break the survey into modules and re-ask willingness to continue at the end of each module.
- Give participants mental breaks with phrases which support the intrinsic motivations of autonomy



Summary

Every questionnaire should be designed to collect data of the highest quality. While there are potential sources of error beyond the control of the researcher, others can be reduced by the design of the questionnaire. This is no less important now online surveys are part of the researcher's toolbox which in itself brings additional challenges to the researcher to maximise data quality.

This eGuide has focused on providing some tips on how to engage and motivate respondents to provide accurate answers by ensuring that they have a good experience throughout the whole survey process.

This will not only include general design issues such as questionnaire length, question wording and layout, but, also to design the questionnaire that explicitly acknowledges the respondent's effort, recognises their effort and helps them feel a sense of belonging.

About Health Outcomes Insights

Health Outcomes Insights is an independent research consultancy serving academia, life science researchers, healthcare agencies and the pharmaceutical industry, get targeted answers to patient behaviour, experience and health outcomes across a range of conditions and diseases – with particular expertise in diabetes.

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